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ON THE AUTHORITY OF GREAT NAMES.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

It is thought by some, that our opinions on important subjects should in no case be influenced by the authority of distinguished names; for on what question, they ask, may not the greatest geniuses be found in opposition to each other? If it be urged, as an argument in favour of Christianity, that certain eminent men have been believers; it will be objected on the other hand, that men not less eminent have been infidels. Since, therefore, as we are told, these opposite authorities mutually destroy each other, this mode of defending Christianity cannot be admitted. Let not those persons, then, who thus argue, avail themselves of the authority of great names to promote infidelity.

But however plausible such reasoning appears, it may be worth while to inquire, whether it is in *this case* solid; and whether the fact, that the christian religion has been pronounced true, by persons of the highest endowments and attainments, does not furnish an argument for its truth.

The accounts contained in the sacred writings, or those, on which their divine origin rests, are in their *nature* difficult to be believed. They are such as the mind at first and previously to examination, is apt to reject as fabulous. It shocks us to be told of events happening in opposition to those laws which regulate and sustain the universe; we do not, we cannot fully admit the truth of them, until we have evidence which appears to us irresistible. When, therefore, we recollect by whom, by what illustrious geniuses and scholars, the christian faith has been embraced, in what manner shall we account for this phenomenon? Are we to suppose that a Locke, a Grotius, a Newton, those

great masters of reasoning, those distinguished lovers and propagators of truth, yielded a *blind* belief to stories which, from their very nature, are liable to be regarded as the fabrications of impostors? Can we imagine, that *they* credited accounts of miracles, of prodigies and wonders, without proof? This were a miracle indeed! No! *such* men believe *such* accounts only because they are constrained to believe them; because they see, that, if the facts related are extraordinary, the testimony which supports them, is likewise extraordinary; and that, if they reject Christianity, they must no longer submit to the government of reason.

Let us now take a view of the other side, and consider how Christianity is affected by the *infidelity* of great men. Have they, let me ask, made a careful, impartial inquiry into the evidences of our religion? If we suppose they have *not* made this inquiry (a supposition which, as it respects many leading deists, is certainly correct) we want no further reason for their infidelity. It, indeed, follows as a natural consequence. Strong evidence alone will produce a conviction of the truth of marvellous events; and strong evidence concerning those recorded in the scriptures is to be obtained only by patient examination.

But it may be asked on the other hand, is it conceivable that great writers would have employed their pens against the christian revelation, without having investigated its pretensions to authenticity? This, it must be confessed, appears at first view almost incredible. But when we consider the nature of the facts contained in the Bible; the aspect, under which they at first present themselves to the understanding; the reluctance we feel in yielding our assent to things so wonderful and so different from any within our own observation; the study requisite to collect the proofs of their authenticity; and the several ways, by which the mind is liable to be misled, such as, by strong prejudice, peculiarly active in countries where the established religion is an enormous mass of abuses—by an accidental habit of looking at Christianity through the medium of those objections and difficulties, which are, perhaps, inseparable from every system of revelation—by a sordid wish that a religion, so pure, so holy, so opposed to an unbridled license of the passions, may not be true—by a silly contempt of vulgar notions, and a perverse ambition, which some men display, and which seems, like a demon, to possess their minds, of astonishing the world by the originality of their ideas, at the expense of truth, religion, virtue, and common sense;—when, in short, we consider, how much there is, or may be, within and without us, to oppose inquiry upon this subject, we can readily conceive, that even the most distinguished ene-



mies of Christianity may have been prevented from acquiring that perception of the evidences of our holy faith, which could alone be expected to produce conviction.

There is another point of view, under which this subject may be considered, perhaps to some advantage. One of the principal weapons, employed by infidels in their attacks upon Christianity, is *ridicule*; and no one has, probably, done more execution. When we find men, whose talents command our admiration, laughing in the face of the world at a religion, for which even the most distant probability of its divine origin ought to inspire reverence, our faith almost staggers; we ask, whether Christianity assailed by such men and in such a way, can possibly be true? Whether minds, which appear to have been sent from heaven to enlighten mankind, can have been thus blind or thus presumptuous? Whether those Titans of genius could have dared to assault the skies? Whether indeed they could have treated, with so much irreverence, the slightest appearance, the very spectres and shadows of divine truth?

But, if we view this mode of attacking Christianity in its just light, we shall be very differently affected by it; we shall consider it as a complete annihilation, in religious matters, of the authority of the writers by whom it is used. It is impossible that a religion, to the truth of which so many great and enlightened minds have given a decided verdict, can be founded on arguments, which, in the opinion of any persons who attend to them, are so feeble, that they should not even shield it from contempt and ridicule. He, therefore, who scoffs and sneers at Christianity, gives a convincing proof, that he never can have made it a serious study; but that he has suffered himself to be borne along by those sportive, contemptuous emotions, which, in a mind void of consideration, are apt to be excited by accounts of supernatural transactions. A view of the real strength of our religion must, otherwise, have taught him more respect for it; its claims to attentive consideration, and its strong marks of truth would have been acknowledged, even though infidelity had continued unsubdued.

On the whole, the belief of great geniuses and scholars of the divine origin of a religion which they have studied, shows, that it must be supported by strong arguments. The disbelief even of equal geniuses cannot prove the contrary; the utmost, it can prove, is, that arguments, which convinced others, did not convince them. And when we consider the various causes of infidelity which exist, and which operate with the greatest force on the loftiest intellects, we shall not be the less disposed to yield our assent to the truth of Christianity, because some men of brilliant

parts have refused theirs, and have not distinguished this religion from the multitude of fabrications, which fraud, enthusiasm and force have imposed upon mankind.

Whatever weight, then, the authority of great names has in this matter, it is altogether on the side of our religion; and to learn how considerable it is, we have only to call to mind a few of the illustrious men that have declared themselves Christians, to be fully satisfied. Though not sufficient to supercede inquiry into the proper evidences of Christianity, it is yet sufficient to procure for it respect and reverence prior to such inquiry; and to produce, at least a suspension of our *disbelief*, till we have seen it overthrown by substantial and irrefragable arguments.

A LAYMAN.

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A SHORT ANSWER TO THE INQUIRY, 'WHY ARE YOU A COMMUNICANT?'

OF the peculiarities of christian worship, the ordinance of the Lord's supper would, I think, most powerfully arrest the notice, and excite the curiosity, of a stranger to our religion. It is formally announced on the sabbath preceding that of its administration; and in most of our churches there is an extraordinary service, for the purpose of disposing those who are to receive it, to a more suitable observance of this rite of the gospel. The day arrives. The elements appointed by Christ are prepared, and believers assemble in the churches. The stranger waits to see the service performed. But no sooner is the christian benediction pronounced, than his astonishment is awakened by the departure of more than half of these worshippers, every one of whom, he supposed, was a disciple of Jesus. The doors are now closed. And what a spectacle is presented before him! Here are parents without their children, and children without their parents; wives without their husbands, and husbands without their wives. The nearest and most endeared relations are separated by this service, the author of which, he had been informed, was the *Son of God*; by whom each of his disciples believes that he shall be judged, and through whom each one hopes for redemption, and for life eternal in heaven. Could this be the design of the founder of christianity? Or are the conditions of admission to his church so rigorous, that a small number only can submit to them? Or is the ordinance indeed obligatory on all? Or was it intended only for one class of christians? These inquiries would naturally arise in the mind of the stranger; and he avails himself of an opportu-



nity of demanding of one who has observed the rite, ‘Why are you a communicant?’ What is his reply?

‘I am a communicant, for the same reason that I receive the gospel as a divine revelation; that is, from a conviction of *the authority of Christ to teach the will of God, and to disclose the conditions of pardon and of final happiness*. Having this conviction, I am bound to obey all which the gospel inculcates; and language cannot make a duty more plain than is the command, *do this in remembrance of me*.’—This is indeed very simple reasoning; but has it not all the force which truth can give to it?

The authority of Christ, in all the commands of the gospel, is the authority of *the Father who sent him*. This will not be denied by any one who receives the New Testament as a divine revelation. If you should ask me, why I am a christian, or a believer in christianity? I should appeal to evidences, external and internal, to prove the divine mission of our Lord. But if you ask me, why I am a communicant? I allege as my first reason, the conviction these evidences have produced in my mind, that he is the Son of God; authorized and empowered to teach the way of salvation; and consequently, that all he requires has the sanction of divine commands. This argument, to be sure, to have any force, presupposes an acknowledgment of Jesus as a Teacher sent by God. But on him who avows his faith in the gospel, does it not impose a perfect obligation to keep this feast, which our Lord has instituted?

This is a very important view of the subject. If he whom we call our Lord was not invested with the authority of God, why do we appeal to any of his laws? If he had this authority, how can we feel ourselves to be safe, while we thoughtlessly and habitually disregard any one of his commands? Do you say, this is but a *positive rite*; and cannot therefore, in its neglect, expose us to the consequences of violating a *moral precept*? But if it be commanded by God, or, which is the same thing, by one sent from God, it is as obligatory, as the moral precepts of the gospel. If the will of God be the basis of religious and moral obligation,—and it is equally so, whether the law be written on our hearts, be suggested by our conditions and relations, or promulgated by a divine messenger,—then are we equally accountable for the neglect, or the abuse of this institution, as we are of any divine command. The authority of God, in all cases, must be equal; and to a believer in the gospel, the command, *do this in remembrance of me*, is a command of God. To us, indeed, the difference may be great, whether a man neglect this service, or the laws of justice and benevolence; for in one case, he injures us

essentially ; and in the other, neither counteracts our interests, nor interrupts our pleasures. But God has no interests to be opposed, and no pleasures to be disturbed by man. He requires duties, not for his own sake, but for ours ; and he would not give his authority to a command, of which it was indifferent whether we should obey, or disregard it. Even therefore if we could not discern any immediate advantages resulting from the service, a disregard of it could not be justified, while we are convinced of its divine appointment ; for as soon as this conviction is produced, the service becomes to us essentially *a religious duty*, of which, equally as of other and universally acknowledged duties, we are to give account to God.

I would not press an observance of this ordinance of our religion *exclusively* on the ground, that its obligation is supported by the authority of God ; for God has not, in fact, required any thing of us, to which he has not attached benefits so important, as to establish the closest relation between our duties, and our highest interests. But the ground of that confidence, with which we look for the blessings which are in any instance assured to our piety and virtue, is, *the authority of him who has assured them* ; and proportionally feeble will be our trust in the authority which dispenses promises, as is our sensibility and reverence of that which demands obedience to laws. A recurrence to the original source of obligation, *the will of God*,—or, which is the same thing as to every command of the gospel, *the will of Christ*,—is therefore not only proper, but frequently necessary, to produce conviction where it is not, and to strengthen it where it already exists. Hence a communicant may, and ought to adduce it as his first answer to the inquiry, 'Why do you observe this service?' that Christ, his Lawgiver, to whom he applies for a knowledge of the will of God, has commanded it. And I appeal to any dispassionate judgment, whether I could innocently neglect, or refuse to partake of this ordinance, while I am convinced that the commands of Jesus have all the obligation of the will of God. I appeal to conscience, if our Lord has indeed given this command to all his disciples, whether his authority does not demand its observance of all, by every consideration that gives dignity to his character, and solemnity to his commands?

It is Jesus, *the Son of God* ; it is Jesus, whom you call your *Saviour* ; whose laws you acknowledge to be the will of the Most High, and by whom we shall finally be judged, who says to you, *Take, eat, this is my body* ; and, *Drink ye all of this cup*. If a stranger to our religion should ask you, whether you are a believer in the gospel of Christ, you would assert your faith with-



out hesitation. But should he also inquire, 'Why then do you not commemorate the love he has expressed for you by his death,' what would be your reply?

We may distinguish the commands of the gospel into different classes, and call them, if we will, religious, moral, and positive. But if we attribute to each different degrees of obligation, and flatter ourselves that we are secure, because we observe those which are most essential, we pervert the word of God, and most dangerously deceive our own hearts. The institution of a law, or of an ordinance, by an authorized Messenger from God, is a perfect evidence of its *importance*, as well as of its obligation; and we derogate from the character of God by the supposition, that any of his appointments may be disregarded with impunity. I do not say, nor would I intimate, that the observance of this ordinance will alone secure for us the favour of God. It will conduce to our salvation no otherwise, than as it is a means of our christian piety and virtue. But it is a part of the will of God concerning us, no part of which is unimportant; and which must be received with desires and endeavours for entire obedience, to secure the blessings it proposes.

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#### SELF-COMMUNION.

ONE of the causes why self-communion is so much neglected is, that we have neither an appointed place, nor time for it. But would publick worship be maintained, if there were no sabbaths? Is any one accustomed to private, or to family prayer, who has no stated seasons for this intercourse with God? Does any one faithfully read the scriptures, who has no allotted hours for this exercise? It is with the means of religion, as with many of the more common duties of life; many, very many acknowledge their importance, and intend to observe them. But a future time, it is thought, will be more convenient, or more favourable, than the present; and the duty is delayed,—perhaps never to be performed. Would you then commence and practise self-examination? Let me recommend the time and place prescribed in the fourth Psalm: "Commune with your own heart *upon your bed*, and be still."

This is not indeed the only time, nor is it the only place, for communion with our own hearts. But surely, in the darkness of night, and when we have lain down, it may be, to rise no more in this world; when our account for another day is about to be sealed,—for eternity; it is a time peculiarly suited for solemn

consideration ; for proposing and answering the inquiries, 'how have I been engaged ? What have I done ? What duty have I neglected ? What law have I broken ? What account, if I were called this night, should I have to render to God ?' And when we awake, refreshed from the fatigue of toil ; when we feel the new vigour that has been imparted by a night of rest ; when hope has been so far accomplished, and we are again permitted to see the sun, and are again called to exercise the faculties God has given for our improvement ; to resume our labours, and to partake of the blessings of heaven ; when we are again about to enter upon scenes of duty, and of discipline ; upon trials, the consequences of which will be so important to us, both in this life and that which is to come ;—it is surely reasonable, it is wise, it is a duty, to pause ; to consider what we are about to do ; what God requires of us ; and, what is the preparation of our hearts for his service. Let me refer to some of the benefits that will result from this practice.

I. In communion with our hearts upon our beds, we may at night retrace and examine with no inconsiderable *exactness*, the courses of our thoughts through the day ; the subjects, expressions, and feelings of our conversation ; the objects we have pursued ; the motives by which we have been actuated ; the passions we have indulged ; all our well intended efforts ; all our omissions of duty, and our more direct transgressions of the will of God. And in the morning, we may at least anticipate the common cares and duties of the day before us ; and inquire, what are the principles and dispositions with which we are prepared to meet them ? We may anticipate *probable* circumstances and events ; temptations, to which we may be exposed, and sufferings we may be called to sustain ; and at least for the few waking hours of one short day, resolve in each to remember and to feel, that we are accountable to God. But the thoughts, the motives and feelings, the words and actions of a month, or of a week, are not so easily to be recalled, nor so distinctly to be perceived. They become effaced from the memory ; or if still there, are blended together ; or, viewed at a distance from the present moment, like other distant objects, they will be seen as a whole, but not in the peculiarities which distinguish them. It is therefore a very great advantage of this frequent self-communion, that it enables us with such *exactness* to examine, and with such *accuracy* to understand, the character and tendencies of our thoughts and words, of our dispositions and conduct.

II. Another great advantage of this frequent self-communion will be, the *impartiality* with which we shall be enabled to judge ourselves, and the *fidelity* with which we may apply the principles, by which we shall at last be judged.



Our judgments are essentially affected by the circumstances, under which we decide concerning our dispositions and actions. If we attempt to judge them, while yet the passions and feelings that excited them are alive and active, these passions and feelings, by which we have been overcome, will plead so loudly and so earnestly in their own justification, that reason and religion will scarcely obtain an impartial hearing. Such an examination will tend as little to our improvement, as that distant and indistinct view of our dispositions and conduct, in which they can scarcely be perceived, and are but very imperfectly comprehended. Or, if we examine ourselves, merely that we may determine what opinions will probably be formed of our characters and actions, we shall easily excuse in ourselves what is wrong, if it have not been condemned by others; and especially, if it have the sanction of the example of those, whose favour we would obtain. Or, if in any instance we incur, or fear public censure, it is very doubtful whether we shall aim at any thing higher, than greater caution in future; it may be, than greater secrecy, that we may avoid the discovery of conduct, of which we have not resolution to reform. But when we lie down at night, to rest from the labours and indulgencies of the day; when the glare of the day has passed away; when appetite and passion, having received their customary indulgence, have sunk to repose; when, amidst the darkness that surrounds us, we feel the presence of God,—and feel too, that from the sleep into which we are about to fall, we may awake in another and untried state of existence; when our tempers, and appetites, and conversation, and conduct through the day, are yet so fresh in our remembrance, that every circumstance of them may be recalled, we may, if we will, be impartial; we may ascertain what have been our deviations from the straight and narrow way; what feeble and drooping sentiments of duty require our fostering care to raise and to strengthen them; what self-denials we have practiced, or are yet demanded of us; and in what condition, if suddenly called, we should appear before God? On our pillows, at night, we may call up and examine even our most secret and suddenly excited motives and feelings; our expressions, and the circumstances in which we used them; all our temptations from within and without. And if, to this examination of ourselves, we bring our principles and hopes as christians, how ineffectual, how evil will appear to have been all the excuses we have admitted of our sins! How ashamed shall we feel of carrying with us to the bar of Christ, the apologies by which we have soothed, or the promises with which we have deluded conscience! How important will appear to us true repentance,—reformation towards God—and a living, active

faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ! Or, when we awake, and passion and appetite are not yet clamorous; and the temptations to which we are peculiarly exposed may be anticipated, in all the circumstances in which they will endanger our virtue; and all our principles can be summoned, and stationed at the posts of danger; in the morning, while yet the mind and heart, calmed and refreshed by rest, are prepared for cool and deliberate action, how favourable is the hour for self-communion; for an *impartial* scrutiny into the tendency of our propensities and habits; for a *faithful* application of the principles, by which alone we may secure the approbation and favour of God! A faithful mind, a mind strongly fortified by the principles of true religion and virtue, may indeed be impartial towards itself, even in the very moment of temptation. But let us not rashly presume upon our strength. It is not but by long discipline, that the passions and appetites are brought to this subjection; and one of the most effectual means of this discipline will be, *daily to commune with our hearts upon our beds, and be still.*

III. In this daily self-communion, we shall have the great advantage of being able to resist whatever evil there is in us, *in its very beginning*; of cropping *the bud* of vicious desire; of tearing vice from our hearts, before it has struck deep its roots, and will demand a long exertion of our whole strength to eradicate it. It will be easy to deny ourselves a second indulgence of a passion, an appetite, or an action, when we are convinced that the first was evil. But the denial of a third, or fourth, or fifth indulgence, may require great resolution and effort; and a vicious habit is to be overcome, only by that long continued, that persevering resistance, during which new tastes and new desires are to be formed into habits. A child may snap asunder the single filaments, which, bound together, form the cable, that holds securely the largest vessel, against the violence alike of the waves and the tempest. And what are vicious habits, but the daily repetition of indulgencies, which, by uniting their strength, become too firm to be broken? Ask the man who is every day fretted by adverse occurrences, or who is habitually profane, or intemperate, why he indulges these propensities? In a calm moment he will acknowledge their guilt, and resolve to reform. But follow him for an hour, and you will see, that much more than a resolution is necessary to effect a change in his character. You will see that habits, like the trees, have grown insensibly, and like them, have acquired hardness and strength with time; that their roots are probably as large as their branches; and although a child might have broken off, and destroyed the tender plant, that it may demand very much more



than even the strength of a man, to rend a matured habit from the heart. How forcibly are we taught, by this tendency of our nature, the importance of an early and frequent attention to our appetites, feelings, words and actions! What a safeguard will it be to our virtue, and what a means of our present and everlasting peace, *daily to commune with our hearts upon our beds, and be still!*

We know others, only by intercourse with them; and it is only by intercourse with our own hearts, that we can know ourselves. But with how many is this the last of all resorts for society and happiness? It does not even occur to their thoughts to make friends of themselves; to seek society in self-communion; to learn human nature, by studying their own passions, propensities, motives and conduct. Let it not be so with us. Let us, in ourselves, follow the streams of desire, of feeling and of action, to their sources, and discover the hidden springs of our conduct, and learn what we are, and whither we are going. Soon will the term of our trial be closed. And how awful will be his condition, who awakes in judgment, ignorant of his own heart; ignorant of it, only because he has not examined it; and who has neglected self-examination, because he felt that he had not resolution to deny the passions, which had become accustomed to indulgence? Then *must* we see, and know ourselves. In the light of God's presence, the secrets of every heart will be disclosed. And how happy will he then be, who, in the knowledge he has possessed of himself, has arrested vicious propensities in their first encroachment; who has followed the guidance of conscience, enlightened by the word of God; and who has daily judged himself, in preparation for his great account! So let us examine and judge our hearts, and we shall not then be judged to condemnation.

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AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CONVERSATION OF JESUS WITH  
NICODEMUS.—John iii. 1—10.

THE conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, recorded in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, is generally considered as an obscure and difficult part of the New Testament; and from the use which is made of it, it is important to ascertain its meaning. I shall attempt to give a popular and just explanation of it; an attempt which, if it has no other merit, will, I hope, afford an example of the manner in which the scriptures may be profitably read.

John iii. 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

This is the first and almost the only time that Nicodemus is mentioned in the gospel history. Of his character we know little more than of his life; the facts related of him are not of a nature to assist us much in an inquiry on this subject. He was a Pharisee, a ruler, and one of the Jewish Senate. The Pharisees, as a sect, are often mentioned in the gospels. They were persons of great influence and consideration in the Jewish community. As the passages, which speak of them, are familiar, I only remark, that they affected a superior sanctity and austerity of manners, observed with rigorous exactness the ceremonials of the Mosaic law, made many and burdensome additions to its fasts, purifications, and tythes, and by their expositions of it and their traditions, they destroyed, or at least greatly injured, the moral influence of their religion; that they were extremely ostentatious in their devotion, filled with spiritual pride, and many of them chargeable with the most flagitious crimes. It should be particularly remarked in respect to them, that they condemned only the actual commission of sin, but did not deem it criminal to entertain evil desires, thoughts, and intentions.\* Their views, in regard to the Messiah, corresponded with those of the nation at large. They expected in him a temporal prince, a military chieftain, who should deliver their nation from the Roman yoke, and restore the throne of David to its pristine glory and splendour.

It is probable that Nicodemus partook of the feelings, prejudices, and opinions, perhaps in some degree of the vices, of those with whom he was associated; and like others of his own sect, regarded religion as consisting rather in ritual observances, than in a devout and kind temper, a pure, benevolent, and useful life. His views respecting the Messiah were doubtless similar to those of his countrymen; and the secrecy, with which he visited Jesus, indicates a fear of forfeiting his rank and influence by associating with this despised Nazarene.

Such probably was Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night and thus addresses him; We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles which thou

\* Josephus, himself a Pharisee, laughs at Polybius for thinking the gods had punished Antiochus, for having formed only a *design* to pillage the temple of Diana, though he had not put it in execution. See Calmet *Art. Pharisee*.



doest, except God be with him. v. 2. Jesus says to him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. v. 3.

This language is highly figurative. To see the kingdom of God, in the view of Nicodemus, meant to witness the state of things, which should take place under the secular prince and deliverer, whose reign he, in common with his countrymen, anticipated; with Jesus it meant, to become his disciple and to subject one's-self to the moral and spiritual dominion of his religion. Jesus was well acquainted with the prejudices, views and expectations of the Jews, and knew that should he at once have instructed them in his true character, the particular objects of his mission, the nature of the authority with which he was clothed, and of the empire which he designed to establish, they would have immediately revolted from him. This accounts for the reserve which he often used, and the enigmatical manner in which he sometimes conveyed his instructions.

The change which Jesus here required of Nicodemus was a moral and intellectual change. This is generally acknowledged. The language is strong as the change, through which such a character as Nicodemus must pass in order to become a christian, was very considerable. It is easier, says Jesus to the rich young man, adopting an Arabian proverb familiar to the Jews, for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. These obstacles in the case of Nicodemus were great. The profession of christianity in that period was attended with peculiar difficulties and required peculiar sacrifices.

In order for Nicodemus to become a christian, his views concerning the nature of religion must be changed. Christianity explicitly taught the divine preference of mercy to sacrifice, and showed the indispensable necessity of subjecting the thoughts, desires, affections, words, nay the whole soul and conduct, to the dominion of religion; it taught that religious rites were only means of moral improvement, and had no value with God, separate from the disposition with which they were performed; and required that the love of God and of mankind should fill the hearts of its votaries, and constitute the supreme rule of life. But this was a new doctrine to Nicodemus; for although benevolence and piety were the end of the law and prophets as well as of christianity, yet, by the corruptions and additions of the scribes and pharisees, the original spirit of the Jewish religion was destroyed. The various rites, which Nicodemus punctiliously performed, and which he regarded with so much complacency, christianity taught him to view in a different light from

what he was accustomed. It inculcated that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed any thing; that his phylacteries were to be thrown aside; that ostentation in his religious services was offensive to God, and that he must retire from the street to the closet to perform his devotions; that the solemn and magnificent services of the Jewish temple were not indispensably necessary towards obtaining the favour of Jehovah; that the divine presence was not confined to the Holy of Holies; that God was a Spirit to be worshipped in spirit; that no part of nature was beyond the care of his paternal providence, no spot concealed from his notice, no prayer so silent but that it was heard in heaven; and that the truly devout, benevolent, and humble heart was the sanctuary where he would vouchsafe his audience, and where his responses should be given.

Next, christianity required a complete change in the opinions of Nicodemus respecting the Messiah. In opposition to the expectation of the Jews, Christ came not as a prince; not with pomp and splendour, but in poverty and humility; not to deliver the Jews from a political, but a moral bondage; not to conduct the nation to high destinies, but to foretel its destruction; not to conquer, but to submit; not to ascend a throne, but to expire on a cross. Well then might Jesus say, blessed is that man, particularly that Jew, more especially that Pharisee, who should not be offended in him. Christianity was further opposed to the prejudices of the Jews. It taught them that their nation were no longer the peculiar favourites, nor their temple the peculiar residence of the Deity, but that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.\*

For Nicodemus to become a christian, it was necessary not only that his religious and political opinions, deeply planted by education and fastened by age, should be changed, but he must subdue his timidity and ambition, he must sacrifice his rank and influence in society, he must expose himself to the reproaches of his own sect and to excommunication from the synagogue, and, a teacher in Israel, must yield himself to the instruction of a despised Galilean. Then again if he were a vicious man, and perhaps he could hardly have escaped altogether the general corruption, christianity demanded still more important changes of a moral nature, which, in men advanced in life, as it is likely from his office that he was, are extremely difficult. The conversion of such a character to the full knowledge and profession of christianity, might with propriety be compared to an introduction to a new existence.

\* Acts x. 35.



But there is another remark to be made on the language, which is here used. The phrase 'being born again' was familiar to Nicodemus, as it was commonly applied to the proselytes from Gentilism to Judaism; they were baptized and circumcised, they left all their relations and connexions, and were said to be born again.\* If it be asked why, if Nicodemus was accustomed to this language, he should so far mistake the meaning of Jesus as to suppose that he spoke of a natural birth, the answer is obvious; Nicodemus visited Jesus to ascertain whether he were the Messiah. For the 'kingdom of God,' or the state of things which he expected under the Messiah, he thought the Jews must be always prepared, as they were descendants of Abraham, to whom this kingdom was understood to be particularly promised; and he had not the most distant conception that for that purpose any change could be necessary, which could be compared with the change, which took place upon the introduction of a Gentile to the profession of Judaism, the conversion of a barbarian and idolater to the worship of the one only living and true God.

The history proceeds with Nicodemus' query to Jesus. How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? v. 4. The reply of Jesus to this question next deserves our attention.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. v. 5, 6.

Jesus here proceeds to correct in a degree the gross mistake into which Nicodemus had fallen in regard to his former remark. He still uses language in a high degree figurative, and his reply is entitled to a critical examination.

To be born of water, as is generally agreed, intends to be baptized. The baptism of a person into any religion was merely the act of receiving him to instruction in the principles of that religion. Baptism, as has been observed, was an invariable ceremony on the introduction of a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and when Jesus informed Nicodemus that it would be necessary at the introduction of a Jew to his religion, he meant to apprise him, that his kingdom was different from the expectations, which had been formed of it; and was not a kingdom, to

\* See Beausobre and L'Enfant's Intro. to N. T. Watson's Tracts, Vol. III. 195. What is singular with regard to this phrase is, that the Hindoos speak of a second birth from acquiring a knowledge of the *Vedas*, which may be called their scriptures, and the phrase *twice born* is in a manner synonymous to a Bramin. Priestley's Notes on Scrip. Vol. III. p. 70.

which the Jews could claim admission merely on account of their descent from Abraham.

*To be born of the spirit* is a phrase of more difficult interpretation. This passage is generally cited as an irrefragable proof of the necessity of some immediate, perceptible, supernatural influences of the divine spirit on the mind, in the conversion of a sinner or an unbeliever to christianity. But there are objections to this interpretation, which compel us to seek one attended with fewer difficulties.

The truth of such an opinion requires, that miracles should be multiplied in the production of effects, which may spring from natural causes, and in all cases be accounted for on the general principles of human nature. Such an opinion is opposed to common experience, to what we know of the influence of custom and association, and to all the schemes of education, which we pursue with our children. We know that children are as susceptible of a moral as of a literary education; and that there are certain means to be employed for the formation, correction, and improvement of their tempers and moral habits, as much as for the enlargement of their minds and the correction of intellectual perversities. Such an opinion has a direct tendency to discourage, if it does not absolutely forbid, all exertions towards the amelioration of our characters; it seems totally inconsistent with many precepts of the gospel, and it represents Jesus and his apostles in their exhortations and commands to repentance, conversion, and improvement, to exertion and activity; demanding of men what they knew it was impossible for them to perform.

These are only a few of the objections which may be made to this opinion, under the form in which it is usually exhibited. At the same time we would not suggest, that we are not often benefited by the direct influences of the Deity on the minds and hearts of men; we doubt not that he is found in weakness to strengthen, in despondency to encourage, in trial to succour, in ignorance to instruct us; but we believe that these influences are conveyed to us through the circumstances of our situation, the events of our lives, the dispensations of his providence, the ordinary and extraordinary instructions with which we are favoured, and in an infinite variety of ways, consistent with human liberty, rather than by any supernatural, perceptible, and irresistible afflatus from heaven.

The inquiry returns, what are we to understand by the remark of Jesus, that except a man be born of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God?



The word *spirit* admits of many significations. An eminent critic\* has enumerated not less than twenty-two different senses, in which it is used in the scriptures. It will answer our present purpose if I mention two of them.

It is often used for what is in other places called, The inward man, that is, the understanding, the will, and the affections; as when, for example, it is said, that *God is to be worshipped in spirit*. It is sometimes used for Christianity itself, for the doctrine of Christ especially, in opposition to Judaism. In this sense it is very often used by St. Paul. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.† He entreats the brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit;‡ that is, without doubt, for the love of their religion. Now, says he, we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter; that is, that we should obey the doctrine of Christ, and not the law of Moses.§ In the epistle to the Corinthians he thus speaks: Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious.|| Many passages of this kind might be produced to show, that the word Spirit, is often employed to signify the christian religion itself; and that it is used in this way with the greatest propriety, it is not necessary to prove.

When our Saviour therefore told Nicodemus, that in order to enter his kingdom, he must be 'born of the spirit,' he probably intended either that he must be born spiritually, that is, mentally, his opinions, views, temper, moral feelings must be changed; or if we understand by spirit, the doctrine or religion of Christ, by being born of this doctrine, we are to understand, the reception of it into the heart and the subjection of the life to its control.

Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. v. 6.

It will be recollected at once, from what has been observed, whence this language is drawn; that it is similar to what was used upon the introduction of a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and it seems evident, that Jesus is here pursuing a comparison between that event and the conversion of a Jew and a Pharisee

\* See Schleusner. Art. *πνευμα*.

† Rom. viii. 2.

‡ xv. 30.

§ vii. 6.

|| 2 Cor. iii. 5—8.

to his religion. We may suppose him to have said, "You, Pharisees, receive Gentiles into the Jewish commonwealth by baptism and circumcision; with respect to such persons, for this purpose nothing more is necessary; by such ceremonies, which are altogether external, they become the adopted children of Abraham, and are entitled to all the privileges of the religion of Moses. Different is the process, by which you Jews are to be initiated into my kingdom. I receive you indeed to a baptism with water, because such a ceremony as this, which, from custom and education, in your view is always associated with a change of religion, is necessary to remind you, that the true kingdom of the Messiah is totally different from your expectations, and is a state of things for which you Jews are not qualified, as you naturally supposed you would be, merely by your descent from Abraham; but it is particularly necessary that you should be born of my doctrine, which is intellectual and moral, which is designed to fill your minds with truth and wisdom, and your hearts with benevolence and piety; a benevolence and piety of such an exalted stamp as you have little idea of; a benevolence, not such as you have learnt from the traditions of your fathers, which say, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but which will prompt you to show kindness to your most bitter enemies; a piety, not such as is satisfied with a mere attendance however strict, upon the services of the temple, but which will constitute a habit of your soul, and lead you in every situation to acknowledge and serve, to love and adore, that almighty, immortal, infinite, and holy Spirit, who is worthy of the purest homage of the purest mind. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" the introduction of a proselyte to Judaism is a mere external ceremony. "That which is born of the spirit is spirit;" the introduction of a proselyte from Gentilism or Judaism to my religion, from a religion of ceremonies and external rites to a religion of the heart and life, is, on the contrary, a spiritual, that is, an intellectual and moral change.

This construction deserves respect from its agreement with other parts of the scriptures. It accords with our Saviour's discourse with the Samaritan woman, when, in reply to her inquiry, whether Jerusalem or Gerizim was the place where men ought to worship, he assures her, that the hour was coming and now had come, when men should not be confined according to her limited views, either to the one or the other of these places, in their worship of God, but when the true worshippers should in every place worship the Father in spirit and in truth.\* It ac-

\* John iv. 21—24.



cords well with the observation of Jesus to those, who mistook his meaning, when he told them, that except they ate his flesh and drank his blood, they had no life in them. When they revolted at this saying, he observes, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life; they have a figurative meaning, and imply the reception and observance of my doctrine.\* It accords well with the explanation, which St. John himself gives of the phrase, '*being born of God*,' in his first epistle. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;† and again, Beloved, let us love one another; for every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.‡ In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.§ We here see, that to receive Jesus as a divinely commissioned messenger, is synonymous with '*being born of God*,' and '*being born of God*' is to love mankind and to work righteousness. There does not appear to be the slightest allusion to a supernatural and irresistible operation of the divine spirit. The phrase '*being born of God*,' intends nothing more than the reception of a religion, devised in his mercy, established by a divine wisdom and power deputed to Jesus of Nazareth, and which he preached to mankind in the name of God; as the phrase being '*begotten of Paul*' and being his son, as he calls Timothy and Onesimus, or his children, as he sometimes calls his converts, intends nothing more than their reception of the religion which he preached to them.

Jesus proceeds to say to Nicodemus, Marvel not that I said unto thee, you must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit. v. 7, 8.

It is the object of Jesus, in this remark, to allay the surprise which Nicodemus appears to have manifested at his discourse, by teaching him in a comparison, drawn from a common occurrence, that this change of his views and character, though the progress of it were imperceptible, might nevertheless be easily ascertained. Thus we hear the sound of the wind and know that it is passing us, but know not how it is impelled, from what place it comes, nor whither it proceeds. So with regard to the change, through which it is necessary for you to pass, in order to become my disciple, it will be easily discovered when it is produced, but we know too little of the human mind to determine with exactness the manner in which it is accomplished; or,

\* John vi. 53, 63.

† 1 John v. i.

‡ iv. 7.

§ iii. 10.

though the effects of my religion in every convert to it will be apparent, yet as there is an unlimited diversity in the characters and circumstances of individuals, it is impossible to point out the particular manner in which the motives, instructions, promises, or threatenings of the gospel operate to produce these effects.

While Nicodemus still appears not to comprehend the observations of Jesus, he says to him, Art thou a master or a teacher in Israel, and knowest not these things? v. 10. This address of Jesus indicates, that he had been speaking not of a supernatural and extraordinary event, but of one which is ordinary and common; of a change of character, similar to such as Nicodemus, a man advanced in life, whose rank and office implied intelligence and observation, must have witnessed in his intercourse with mankind; a change from ignorance to knowledge, and from vice to virtue.

The foregoing explanation of this difficult and obscure passage of scripture is offered with diffidence, and a disposition to receive any more consistent and rational interpretation. I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.

If the exposition, which has been given, be admitted, the passage yields no support to the doctrine of regeneration by a supernatural, divine, irresistible and arbitrary influence of the Holy Spirit, in favour of which doctrine it is so often and confidently produced. If this be the doctrine of the scriptures, it must be proved by other passages than this; perhaps our examination of this may contribute to the better understanding of other passages with a reference to this subject. If, on the other hand, this illustration of this passage should not be admitted, it is still a serious question, how far remarks which were addressed particularly to Nicodemus, a Jew and a Pharisee, and one concerned in the government of Judea at the time of the appearance of Christ, may be properly applied to the cases of persons who have been born and always educated under the full light of the gospel; who can have but faint ideas of his views and feelings, and to whom, consequently, christianity presents itself under totally different circumstances.

There is, however, one important view in which this subject is useful to christians in every age. In a most striking manner it calls our attention to the spiritual nature of the religion, which we profess; it reminds us of the utter insufficiency of any privileges or external services alone to recommend us to the favour of God; and it urges the indispensable necessity of sanctifying the Lord our God in our hearts.\* The fruit of the Spirit, that

\* 1 Pet. iii. 15.



is, of the religion of Christ, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.\* H.

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THE MODE OF OPPOSING LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY, EXEMPLIFIED.

THE Christian Public are well aware, that the favourite and almost the only method of opposing liberal Christianity in this neighbourhood, has hitherto been by exciting violent prejudices against it and making men afraid of it. It is equally well known, we are sorry to add, that the means employed to produce this effect have not always been the most christianlike, gentlemanly, or honourable. We have thought it might do good to copy into our work some specimens of this. We do not know any better way of exposing such writers than the republishing of their own words.

Three of the latest examples which occur to us, we beg our readers to look at carefully. The first is a notice of *Wakefield's Translation of the New Testament* from the *Boston Recorder* of March 25, 1820. Let any man of good feelings and decent manners say what impression it is calculated to make.

"It is understood that in Maine, there is a man employed in obtaining subscriptions for a *new translation* of the New Testament; and from all we can gather, 'the hand of' some modern 'Joab is in this thing.' The translation, as we are informed, is designed to nourish that *monstrous birth of reason*, Socinianism, which can neither be made to thrive nor live, by the 'milk' or 'strong meat' of God's word, and absolutely requires a sort of minced dish every now and then, prepared at the shop of some semi-philosophical and semi-deistical confectioner, under the name of Improved Version, or New Translation. As it is the design of this subscription paper to give the most extended circulation to the scriptures, 'cut and carved' according to 'man's device,' without a particle of 'the Life' remaining in them, or one mark of the Holy Spirit on them, we deem it our duty to caution our readers against the imposition. 'Wherefore will ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not.' "

\* Galatians v. 22—25.

The next example is from the *Panoplist* of August 1819. It is less inconsistent with the known character of this work, than the former example with the character of the *Recorder*.

"It is worthy of notice, that Socinians can make catechisms, although they are so much in the habit of inveighing against them. This we had known from what had taken place in Boston and the neighbourhood, within a few years past. *Perhaps there has not been a more fruitful topic of discussion, in the pulpits of the liberal party, than the enormous mischiefs of teaching children catechisms, and the frightful sin and egregious folly of making a catechism. While the attack upon catechisms was carried on in a most fierce and violent manner, several of the clergy, who had been foremost in the attack, actually made new catechisms and published them with their names; some for their particular congregations, and others for the world at large. To reconcile their professions with their conduct would be a task, which we are not required to perform.*"

There is nothing to be said respecting this, except that the statement it contains is altogether false. We will not trust ourselves to speak of a man who is capable of so positively asserting what he could not know to be true, and what he probably did know to be false; especially when it is impossible that it should have been done from a good motive.

It is but fair to add a paragraph, which follows that which we have quoted.

"It is manifest, however, that the preaching and the conduct proceeded from the same hostility to the principal catechisms in circulation. If these could not be driven from circulation entirely, it was hoped that they might be supplanted to some extent by little manuals of a different tendency; and it was easy to see, that the objection was not so much to catechisms themselves, as to the *kind* of catechisms in which the public had confidence. We suppose that not fewer than a dozen of these rivals to the *Assembly's Catechism*, and the catechisms of Dr. Watts, have made their appearance within a few years."

There is more truth in this. Undoubtedly there is no objection "to catechisms in general," but there are exceedingly strong objections to "certain kinds of catechisms." And there are few lovers of scriptural christianity, who would not rejoice to see *The Assembly's Catechism* supplanted by one of a different tendency.

The third example is from the *Christian Spectator* of May 1820. It is less remarkable than the two preceding, and we trust is not to be regarded as indicating what is in future to be the style of that respectable work.



"But, unfortunately, his\* views of religion are undefined and wavering. What shall we think of the man who bestows equal applause on the soft *sentimentalism* of Alison, in which not one trace of the gospel can be found, and the deep-toned energy of Chalmers, which 'pierces to the dividing asunder' the closest recesses of guilt? With such a man the christian religion is but a name, a mere appendage of a more civilized state of society, ————useful in adding its weighty sanctions to the moral code, and therefore entitled to respect, but *without one particle of authority over the understanding or the heart*. Multitudes of such men we have, especially in one part of *our* country, who reject with scorn the appellation of infidel, who found churches to the one Jehovah, and propagate their *want* of faith with the most eager zeal, while they refuse their homage to Him whom all the angels are commanded to worship, make his blood of no effect as an expiation for sin, condemn the influences, and deny the existence of his Holy Spirit, and reduce the gospel of his grace to a mere code of moral precepts."

Our readers will draw their own inferences from these extracts, which afford a fair sample of the efforts which are made to keep alive such prejudices against Unitarians, as shall prevent a deliberate and candid inquiry into the correctness of their sentiments. Much has been done, and much will be done in this way to hinder the progress of the truth. We expect it; but it does not discourage us. The same arts were used by the orthodox Jews in the time of our Saviour, to prevent a fair examination of his claims, and crush his religion in its infancy; and they succeeded but too well for a time, notwithstanding the power of his miracles. But at length truth triumphed over prejudice; and we trust that truth will yet triumph over prejudice.

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#### ON ORIGINAL SIN.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

SIR—Should you think the following worthy of a place in the Christian Disciple, please insert it.

A FRIEND TO THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

WOULD that party of christians, who have seen fit to style themselves "the orthodox," and their dissenting brethren, form an explication of the scripture doctrine of "original sin," in

\* Speaking of the author of *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*.

which they would agree, the contention "about *fundamentals*," to adopt the phraseology of good, honest Richard Baxter, "by which the Christian world, for more than a thousand years, has been plagued," would cease. In this case, it is evident that little, if aught, would remain, that could excite them to interested dispute.

For many years, I have been fully convinced, that the "orthodox" explication of this doctrine is not true. When Professor Stuart, in his strictures on a part of Mr. Channing's sermon, gave to the public a pledge that the whole of that sermon should be reviewed, it excited in my mind an high expectation, that the doctrine of original sin would be ably discussed. For, as is well known, the superstructure of Calvinism has no other basis for its support, than *that particular* explication, which the friends of that system give of the scripture doctrine of original sin. It constitutes the foundation of their building, the key-stone of their arch. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose, that the view of this subject, given in the Letters of Professor Woods, recently published, is the result of the united efforts of the gentlemen, who are at the head of the Theological Institution at Andover. To those who are acquainted with the writings of President Edwards, and of others on this subject, it cannot be necessary to observe, that this production is very far from meeting the public expectation.

My object, however, is not to attempt a review of Dr. Woods's letters, but to state, among several views which my mind contemplates, one particular view of the subject, which has long set my heart perfectly at rest, in the utter rejection of the orthodox explication of the doctrine.

The explication which our orthodox brethren give of this doctrine, is, virtually, this, viz.:—That, in consequence of the sin of Adam, God has caused the fact to exist, that each of his posterity enters existence possessed of a corrupt moral nature, which is the source of his actual sins. That, in this state, mankind are objects of abhorrence in the view of their Maker, and that he will consign them to everlasting destruction, unless, by an act of grace, he should renew their hearts, and thus dry up the fountain whence their evil actions proceed. And respecting this act of grace, they teach, that although it is passed in favour of some individuals of the human race, yet the number of those who are thus distinguished is very small, in comparison of the whole family of mankind.

If this doctrine be true, it evidently is a doctrine of infinite moment; whether the subject be viewed in its relation to man, or as it refers to the *moral* character of God. Viewed in its re-



lation to *man*, this doctrine must excite in the mind the very interesting inquiry, whether our existence is a blessing? or, whether our existence is not, or may not prove, or probably will not become to us, of all possible calamities, infinitely the greatest? And is it possible, that views like these, *can* lead man to that reverence of God, and to those *grateful* sentiments towards him, in which religion essentially consists?

Not only in its relation to *man*, but this doctrine is of infinite moment as it refers to the *moral* character of *God*. For, if we admit this doctrine to be true, who can refrain from inquiring, with most extreme solicitude, Where are evidences to be found, that God is just, that he is benevolent, and, as we are taught to believe, that he has a "tender regard toward the work of his hands?" And why are we taught to call him our *Father*?

The doctrine of original sin according to the orthodox explication, is then evidently a doctrine of infinite moment, both in its relation to man and as it bears on the moral character of God. Were it, therefore, a doctrine of truth, it must have been perfectly known as such to that *great Teacher*, who came from God to shew unto man the way of salvation. Apprehending the subject in all its magnitude and importance, he must, in his *personal* ministry, have treated the doctrine in the manner in which our orthodox brethren do. It must have been implied, and very *strongly* implied, in every sermon he preached. It must have been *professedly* the subject of *many*, and indeed of *most* of his sermons; and on the subject he would have employed the *force* of his divine reasoning and eloquence. But, I ask, was this the fact? No man, who is acquainted with our Saviour's sermons, if he have any regard to truth, or to his own reputation, will dare to assert, that the doctrine of original sin, agreeably to the *orthodox* mode of explication, is to be found in any of the sermons of our Saviour. And, if not taught by *him*, the doctrine most evidently is *not a Christian doctrine*.

In opposition to this statement, our orthodox brethren say, that there are several passages, (they admit them to be few) in the sermons of our Saviour, which, agreeably to their exposition, make it evident that our Saviour admitted their doctrine of hereditary depravity. It may be replied, that the passages to which they allude, will very fairly bear a different interpretation from that which they give to them. But, not to contest with them the point, whether their interpretation, or ours, is the most correct, we will concede to them these passages in their own mode of explication. But, even in this case, what is the amount of their argument? It is simply this; that in the sermons of the great Teacher, two or three passages are found, which, by a

particular mode of interpretation, seem to imply that Jesus admitted the doctrine of hereditary depravity. But, can any person believe, if the doctrine of original sin according to the Calvinistic explication were true, that *He* who came into this world to "teach us of the Father," would have treated in so very cursory a manner a doctrine, which, if it is true, is evidently a doctrine of infinite moment, not merely as it relates to man, but also as it bears on the moral character of God?

Not satisfied, as it would seem, with this reason, in accounting for the fact that Jesus, in his sermons, treated the subject of original sin in a manner so very different from that mode which *they* adopt, our orthodox brethren assign another reason. Our Saviour, say they, in his personal ministry, did not intend to give to mankind a full view of his religion. He gave them the *first* part of christianity only, reserving further communication, which would complete his system of moral instruction, to be conveyed to mankind after his ascension, by the ministry of his *apostles*. And, although it should be admitted, say they, that Jesus in his personal ministry did *not* plainly and explicitly teach the doctrine of hereditary depravity, yet his apostle Paul explicitly taught the doctrine, and with great emphasis dwelt on the subject. In the view of this statement, the question will arise, Did this *first* part of christianity comprise so essentially the system, that a practical belief of it rendered men christians, and prepared them for heaven? Or, was this first part of christianity so defective, that men might yield to it a practical belief, and yet remain in the "gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity?" If it should be said, that a practical belief of that Christianity, which, in his personal ministry, our Saviour gave to mankind, *will* render men christians, and prepare them for heaven, they then admit that the doctrine of original sin, in *their* view of the subject, is not a christian doctrine, or at least that the inculcation of it is not necessary to the conversion of sinners. Or, should they assume the other side of the question, and say, that the christianity given to mankind personally by its author, was so partial and defective a view—partook so little of the essence of the system, that persons might believe in it and yet *not* be christians, they, in this case, reflect the highest reproach on the character of our Saviour, as the great Prophet of his church.

If our Saviour taught not the doctrine of original sin, in the Calvinistic sense of this article, it cannot be possible that his *apostles* taught the doctrine. Should we, therefore, by our explication of any of their writings, state them to have taught the doctrine, one of the following inferences must be true; viz. Either in the passages in question, the apostles spoke *not* in the name



and by the authority of our divine Master, but were *impostors*; or we have wholly misapprehended the true import of these passages in their writings; and which of these most probably is the fact, every man must decide for himself.

Of the very few passages in the sermons of our Saviour, which have ever been adduced for the purpose of giving support to the Calvinistic view of the doctrine of original sin, by far the most important is that passage in the gospel of John, 3d chap. 3d ver.—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again,” &c. In view of this passage the question will arise, Was it necessary that Adam and Eve, after their fall, should have been “born again” in order to enter into the kingdom of God? If it was, as I presume our orthodox brethren will admit, then persons may be the proper subjects of regeneration, who were not born with a corrupt nature; of course this passage of our Saviour constitutes no argument in proof of *hereditary depravity*; and, consequently, it could not have been intended by *him*, who, in point of *accuracy* as well as of force, “spake as never man spake,” as an argument in support of that doctrine.

In the case of our first parents it is seen, that actual transgression, without any previous corrupt *nature*, reduced *them* to such a state of moral ruin, as rendered *them* the proper subjects of that grace which is displayed through a Mediator; and of divine energy, employed on the powers of their understanding and heart, to be indispensable means of preparing them for heaven. It is not, therefore, necessary to suppose, that *our* entrance on life in a state of moral depravity is requisite to render *us* the proper subjects of his power, who is “*mighty to save*.” Our *voluntary transgression* produces that derangement of our intellectual and moral powers, which renders it absolutely necessary to our future happiness, that we become the subjects of that moral process, which, in the very figurative language of the scripture, is sometimes termed a “*new birth*;” but which is often designated by the plain, simple, easily-comprehended word, “*repentance*.”

If the foregoing remarks are just, it is submitted to you, whether that very celebrated passage of our Saviour is not fairly wrested out of the hands of our orthodox brethren.

## UNITARIAN EXPOSITOR.

## No. III.

"I SUPPOSE," says Wardlaw, "it will readily be admitted, that *if there be a plurality of persons at all* in the one Godhead; that plurality is a trinity. For although the views of the doctrine of the trinity, held by those who have attempted to explain it, have been various, yet trinity and unity (taking the latter term in the sense affixed to it by antitrinitarians) are properly the only two hypotheses on the subject. All who believe the doctrine of a *plurality* to be taught in the scriptures, believe that plurality to consist of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. None have believed in more, none in fewer. Plurality and trinity may, therefore, on this question be considered as convertible terms; and consequently every proof of a plurality as proof of a trinity. On this principle, as the whole of the evidence of the divinity of Christ, is evidence of a plurality, it might all be considered as bearing on the point, which it is now my object to establish—the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit."

According to this writer,\* then, whoever becomes convinced by any means of the existence of two beings, agents, or persons, (however denominated) in the Godhead, is bound to admit without further proof, the existence of a third. That is, he is to acknowledge an object of worship without any particular proof of his existence.

How conclusive such reasoning is, appears from this, that it will prove to equal satisfaction the affirmative or the negative of the same proposition. In the arguments quoted above it is implied, that in order to the reception of the doctrine of the personality and deity of the spirit, no particular proof direct to that point is needed. Suppose, then, that in examining the evidence of the trinitarian doctrine, one attends to the proof of the deity of the spirit before that of the son. If he finds that no sufficient evidence is given for the former, why may he not reason thus:—There are only two opinions on the subject of the Godhead; that there are three persons in it, and that there is but one. The deity of the Holy Spirit (one of the three alleged persons) is not proved. There is therefore but one person, and the evidence of the deity

\* And according to Professor Stuart, "All difficulties, in respect to the doctrine of the trinity, are essentially connected with proving or disproving the divinity of Christ." (p. 45. 3d ed.) "When this (the divine nature of Christ) is admitted or rejected, no possible objection can be felt to admitting or rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity." p. 59.



of the son needs not to be examined.—The argument is equally good on either side of the question. A notable one then doubtless it must be.

We are not so much surprised that according to the false modes of interpreting scripture which prevail, some persons should believe themselves convinced that Christ is the supreme God; but we are surprised that the opinion should be professed, with scarcely a shadow of evidence in its support, that there is a third person equally supreme God with the Father and Son,—the Holy Ghost.

It would seem that the existence of a Being for whom divine honours are claimed, was a subject of primary consideration. Yet the proof of the personality of the Spirit is scarcely touched on by orthodox writers. In that budget of blunders, Jones on the Trinity, not the slightest reference is made to it. The author actually proceeds as if the existence of a living Being, distinct from the Father, called the Holy Spirit, was not called in question, and as if the only dispute was whether this person were divine.\* Nay, what is very remarkable, the identical texts which prove that the words Holy Ghost, when spoken of a person, are used, not of a distinct person, but of God the Father himself, this writer assuming that they are separate persons, employs to prove that both are equally God.

We do not say that the phrase *Spirit of God*, and others similar, never stand for a divine person. We think it certain that they do;—for God THE FATHER. (1 Cor. ii. 11. Ps. cxxxix. 7. Comp. Is. lxiii. 10. with Num. xiv. 11. and Ps. lxxviii. 56.) We are not now to point out the various meanings of the phrase, but refer for them to an essay on the subject in the fourth number of this work. The ground we maintain is, that whenever it means a living Being, it means God the Father, and herein we dissent from the orthodox. It is indispensable to the defence of their belief, that they should prove that the phrase is used in scripture to denote a person in places where it is *not* applied to God the Father. To the support of this proposition, though of vital importance to the doctrine of the trinity, they have not always given any attention. When they have, it has been principally by the use of texts, in which the figure of personification, so common among the sacred writers, is applied to divine influences on the soul. For the explanation of these texts, as we should not be able to give it in a shorter compass, nor with equal force and clearness, we refer to the essay just named. (Disciple, New Series, Vol. I. p. 260.)

\* He not only implies but affirms this, discovering a disgraceful ignorance, or a singular effrontery. "The church affirms the Spirit to be in God, as a person of the same divine nature; the Arians deny it, and will understand him to be out of God, not a *person of the divine nature*, but *one inferior to*, and distinct from it."

"The Holy Ghost," it is said by trinitarians, "is distinctly spoken of as *coming*, *testifying*, *receiving*, *showing*, *teaching*, *hearing*, *speaking*, &c. all of which evidently imply personal agency."

*Time*, we reply, is distinctly spoken of as *coming* (Luke ix. 51) and *prayers* and *alms* (Acts x. 4.) A *song* is distinctly spoken of as *testifying* (Deut. xxxi. 21.) and the *pride* of Israel (Hos. v. 5.) The *heavens* are distinctly spoken of as *receiving* (Acts iii. 21.) and the *earth* (Gen. iv. 11.) If these words "imply personal agency," then are *time*, *prayers*, *alms*, &c. persons. One, who does not understand that according to the common use of language such offices are predicable of things inanimate, may, by turning to a concordance, find applied to things never suspected to possess a personal existence, the same words, on which, when applied to the Holy Spirit, the proof of its personality is founded.

This is not trifling, but a sober unexceptionable answer to an argument seriously urged. By such reasoning as this is a doctrine of such moment (if it were true) as that of the trinity, defended.

There are three texts of principal note, in which divine attributes are thought to be ascribed to the Spirit in such manner as to lead to the belief of its having a distinct personal existence, viz. Psalm cxxxix. 7. 1 Cor. xii. 11. Heb. ix. 14.

I. *Omnipresence* is thought to be ascribed to a person called the Spirit in Ps. cxxxix. 7. "*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*"

Who is so blind with system as not to see that by the *spirit of God*, is meant here the mind of God, or God himself, according to the same use of the word *spirit* as in 1 Cor. xvi. 18. "*They have refreshed my spirit and yours,*" i. e. they have refreshed me and you. Gal. vi. 18. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *your spirit*," i. e. be with you. 1 Cor. ii. 11. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save *the spirit of a man* that is in him," i. e. the MAN HIMSELF.\* 1 Sam. xx. 4. "Whatever *thy soul* desireth, I will even do it for thee." Jer. xiv. 19. "Hath *thy soul* loathed Zion;" evidently the same as, hast thou loathed Zion. And the holy psalmist himself explains in the following verse, that this is the sense in which he uses the phrase, for he goes on to say, "If I ascend up into heaven, *thou art there*; if I make my bed in hell, behold, *thou art there*."

The same thing is affirmed in verse 7th, of God's *presence*, and in verse 10th of his *hand*, and his *right hand*, which is declared

\* The apostle goes on: "Even so the things of God knoweth no one but the spirit of God." Unless we will maintain that the spirit of a man is a different person from that man, we must (if we allow any propriety in the analogy pointed out by the apostle,) grant that the Spirit of God is not a different person from God.



in verse 7th of his *spirit*, viz. that they reach throughout the universe. If then his *spirit* is proved by this passage to be a distinct divine person, his *presence*, &c. are equally proved to be so. The argument favours the existence of three other divine persons, in the same degree as it teaches the personality of the Spirit.

II. The *power of willing* is understood to be ascribed to the Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 11. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally *as he will*;" and thence it is argued that the Spirit is a person.

The reader of the New Testament in the original, need not be informed that the proper rendering of the last clause in this passage is by the neuter pronoun; "dividing to every man severally *as it will*." It is thus rendered by Wakefield. The context shows, that spiritual gifts are the subject of the apostle's discourse. There is nothing to lead one to the idea, that a person is spoken of, except the supposed ascribing of the faculty of volition to the Spirit. The argument then is this:

Only a person can be said to will.

The Spirit is said to will.

Therefore the Spirit is a person.

The major proposition,—that only a person can be said to will,—is indefensible.

By a figurative, but common and intelligible use of language, the will, in strictness of speech exerted by the agent, is predicated of the instrument. We should not think the phraseology peculiar, if it were said that the sword of the Lord slays whom it will, his eyes look where they will, his feet go where they will, his hand does what it will, &c.; nor should we conclude thence, that his sword, his eyes, his feet, and hand were persons. When his Spirit is said then to distribute *as it will*, why, for the sake of explaining a form of language so familiar, should we resort to the bold hypothesis of introducing a new person into the Godhead? *The flesh* is said to have a will, (John i. 13.) In John iii. 8., the *wind* is said to blow "where it listeth." Is the wind a thinking agent? The last clause of James iii. 4. literally translated, is, "*Whither soever the impulse or the will of the governor listeth*." Is the impulse or will of the governor therefore a person? 1 Pet. iii. 17., literally rendered, reads thus: "It is better *if the will of God will*." Is the *will of God* a separate person? No more then can this be affirmed of the *Spirit of God*.

III. *Eternal existence* is understood to be ascribed to the Spirit in Heb. ix. 14. "The blood of Christ who, *through the eternal Spirit*, offered himself without spot unto God," &c. It is hence inferred, that the Spirit is a divine person.

Wakefield, we cannot find on what authority, reads ἀμωμον (spotless) for αἰώνιον (eternal.) There is considerable weight of evidence to show that ἅγιον (holy) and not αἰώνιον, was the original word used by the apostle. But granting, as on the whole seems probable, that the text ought to stand as in the common version, we do not find much speciousness in the argument by which the personality of the Spirit is inferred from it. The reasoning is merely this; that to nothing but a person, is eternity ascribed in scripture. The Spirit therefore, having eternity ascribed to it, must be a person. Now the fact is manifestly otherwise. Nothing is more common in scripture than to predicate eternal existence of the attributes of God, and of inanimate things. The divine power and purpose are said to be eternal, (Rom. i. 20. Eph. iii. 11.) Eternal redemption, (Heb. ix. 12.) The hills and mountains are called everlasting; (Gen. xlix. 26. Hab. iii. 6.) and the gospel (Rev. xiv. 6.) God's righteousness is called everlasting, (Ps. cxix. 142.) his kindness, (Isai. liv. 8.) his love. (Jer. xxxi. 3.) His salvation, (Is. li. 8.) his throne, (Lam. v. 19.) his dominion, (Dan. iv. 3.) and his mercy, (Luke i. 50.) are from generation to generation. His faithfulness, (Ps. lxxxix. 1.) his truth, (Ps. c. 5.) his remembrance, (Ps. cii. 12.) and his years (Ps. cii. 24.) are to all generations. If then God's power, purpose, &c. are not proved, by being called eternal, to be separate persons, neither is his Spirit.

Our Lord is said to have offered himself *through or by the eternal Spirit*. By this should we not understand *by the eternal mind*, the eternal will, counsel, purpose, i. e. of God;—a sense in which the expression would be equivalent with that in Acts ii. 23. iii. 18. and iv. 28. This explanation is fortified by the consideration that the apostle, in this passage, is comparing the priestly office of Christ with that of the priests of the temple, who presented their offerings according to the temporary appointment of God, “for the time then present,” “until the time of reformation.” (vv. 9, 10.)

We conclude by submitting two questions to the consideration of our readers.

The Holy Spirit, in the passage where it is most strikingly personified, (John xvi. 13.) is said *not to speak of himself, but to speak whatsoever he shall hear*. It is said to make intercession, (Rom. viii. 26.)—It is represented (Gal. iv. 6.) as paying reverence to the Father. These representations are inconsistent with the orthodox doctrine of its personality and equality with the Father. When we refer to texts, which show the inferiority of the Son, we are answered, that they allude to the Son when clothed in human nature. Now it is not pretended, that the third person in the Deity ever took on him human nature. By



what use of language then, if a person equal with the Father, is he represented by the sacred writers as the Father's instrument and inferior?

Once more; if the Holy Spirit were, properly speaking, a distinct person from the Father and Son, yet God equally with them, how could our Lord have said, (Matthew xi. 27.) "No one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." How could he have said, (John xvii. 3.) "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," and omit all allusion to one, who, equally with his Father and himself, had the government of the world and the disposal of the final destiny of men? How could he have said, (Matt. xxiv. 36.) "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," if besides the Father, there were two omniscient persons? For if, consistently with the trinitarian hypothesis, this might be said of the Son while dwelling in the flesh, the mind of the Spirit at least was never obscured by participation in human frailty. Why, when he represents himself as coming "in his glory, and all the holy angels with him" to reward those "blessed of his Father," is the Holy Ghost not named; and why in none of the enumerations in scripture of all in heaven, and all in earth, is no express mention made of a Being of such importance as a person in the Godhead?

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## MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS.

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### SPANISH INQUISITION.

WE have probably heard at last of the final suppression of this infamous tribunal. A history of it by M. Llorente, published a short time since, was mentioned in the last volume of the Christian Disciple, p. 237. According to the statements in this work, it appears that from the year 1452 to 1808, 31,718 persons had, in consequence of its decrees, been burnt to death; 17,411, who had either perished in prison or effected their escape, had been burnt in effigy; and 287,622 others had been condemned to different severe punishments, such as whipping and imprisonment.—See *Bertholdi's Kritisches Journal*, B. 8. s. 332.

*New Series—vol. II.*

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## CHARACTER OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The following passage is from Mr. Burke; and is one specimen of those general remarks, full of wisdom, which were thrown off by his powerful mind whenever it was in action, and which are to be found scattered every where in his writings.

“The Scripture is no one summary of doctrines regularly digested, in which a man could not mistake his way; it is a most venerable, but most multifarious collection of the records of the divine œconomy, a collection of an infinite variety of cosmogony, theology, history, prophecy, psalmody, morality, apologue, allegory, legislation, ethics, carried through different books, by different authors, at different ages, for different ends and purposes.

“It is necessary to sort out what is intended for example, what only as narrative; what is to be understood literally, what figuratively; where one precept is to be controlled and modified by another; what is used directly, and what only as an argument *ad hominem*; what is temporary, and what of perpetual obligation; what appropriated to one set or one state of men, and what the general duty of Christians.”

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The following passage, distinguished by interesting description and truth and tenderness of sentiment, is from Bright's Travels in Hungary (pp. 133—136.) Many of our readers may recollect that the account of one incident contained in it, has been already quoted in a work deservedly popular.

“I now explained to my conductor, that he must drive me to the post-house; but when I got there, the whole yard was full of people, and I learned that the post-master, having lost his wife, was on the point of following her corpse. This, I plainly saw, would put a stop to my journey for the day, and I did not feel much disappointed, as it afforded me an opportunity of attending a ceremony which no one ought to neglect in a foreign country. After three priests, with crosses and incense boxes—followed by the coffin, and accompanied by a numerous train of mourners and boys with wax lights—had moved with solemn singing towards the burying-place, I went quickly to the inn, dismissed my waggon, and joined the procession. The place of burial was considerably elevated, at the distance of half a mile from Léva,—a solitary spot of ground, adorned only by crosses raised by the hands of affection over departed friends. As the body was laid in the ground, I thought I perceived more emotion in the spectators than usual. The rite being performed, the assembly separated during the performance of a solemn chant. The greater part retired to a still higher ground covered with vineyards,



on the summit of which a temple is erected as a memorial of our Saviour's death upon Mount Calvary. I remained a little longer than the rest, and beheld a most affecting and beautiful scene. It was the tribute paid by mothers, by children and by friends, to the remains of those who had gone before them. Tears flowed in torrents from the eyes of a mother and daughter, who kneeled by the side of a tomb which seemed to have been long the abode of him over whom they prayed. In another spot two little children cried aloud, as they lay with their faces upon a heap of earth, whilst others kissed the mould which had been lately raised.

"The loneliness of the spot,—the Carpathian chain stretched out in the distance,—the obscurity of approaching night,—the stillness of nature interrupted only by the cries of widows and of children,—were sadly, yet harmoniously, combined; and he must have been cold indeed who could witness the scene without emotion.

"These humble peasants of Hungary have, through the native promptings of the heart, so blended the memory of their departed friends with the feelings of devotion, that nations boasting of higher degrees of cultivation may respect and follow their example. We may civilize and refine away our feelings till the simple dictates of nature are completely yielded up. With the majority of mankind consolation is sought in forgetfulness; to present a variety of new objects to the mind and a constant succession of changes, is deemed the duty of a comforter. Thus the only feelings which accompany the death of a friend are supposed to be those purely selfish remembrances which recall to our minds the comforts we have lost,—reducing the whole sentiments of friendship to a standard according to which our estates, our houses, and our fortunes, hold the highest places. For my own part, I am persuaded that the human mind, which derives such satisfaction in the formation of friendships, is capable of maintaining and cherishing these emotions throughout its whole existence; and that we are truly no more pardonable in attempting to forget a friend who is dead, than we should be in forgetting one who is absent. If putting aside all unintelligible motives, there is one which can be felt and explained, more pure than others, leading us to rejoice in our future prospects, it is the idea and hope of meeting again the friends from whom we have been separated by death.

"When I was at Berlin, during the preceding year, I followed the celebrated Iffland to the grave. Mingled with some pomp, you might trace much real feeling. In the midst of the ceremony, my attention was attracted by a young woman, who stood

near a mound of earth newly covered with turf, which she anxiously protected from the feet of the pressing crowd. It was the tomb of her parent; and the figure of this affectionate daughter presented a monument more striking than the most costly work of art." \* \* \* \* \*

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TO THE EDITORS OF THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.

GENTLEMEN,

Please to insert the annexed creeds in parallel columns in your Disciple. Yours, &c. JOHN.

"I believe then,

"1. That God is one, *numerically one*, in essence and attributes. In other words, that the infinitely perfect spirit, the Creator and preserver of all things, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has numerically the same essence and the same perfections, so far as we know any thing of them which can be the subject of affirmation. To particularize; The son possesses not simply a similar or equal essence and perfections, but numerically the same as the father, without division and without multiplication.

"2. The son (and so the Holy Spirit) does in some respects, *truly* and *really*, not merely nominally or logically, differ from the father."—*Stuart's Let.*

I believe then,

1. That man is one, *numerically one*, in essence and attributes. In other words, that the finite imperfect spirit, the Lord and ruler of this world, the father, son, and brother, has numerically the same essence and the same perfections, so far as we know any thing of them, which can be the subject of affirmation. To particularize; The son possesses, not simply a similar or equal essence and perfections, but numerically the same as the father, without division, and without multiplication.

2. The son (and so the Brother) does in some respects, *truly* and *really*, not merely nominally or logically, differ from the father.

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ORIGINAL POETRY.

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[The following verses are the composition of a gentleman well known and respected here, who is now removed to a distant sphere of usefulness and honour. They were written just before



his last visit to New England, and immediately after a severe fit of sickness.]

LINES WRITTEN ON LEAVING CHARLESTON FOR THE SEASON.

Farewell, awhile, thou hospitable spot!  
Farewell, my own adopted dwelling-place!  
Scene of my future consecrated lot,  
And destin'd circuit of my earthly race.

Farewell, ye friends, who hung so long and true,  
With sleepless care, around my fever'd bed,  
And ye, from whom a stranger's title drew  
Profuse attentions, delicately shed.

Yet why a stranger? since no other home  
Remains for me; ev'n now, deprest, I fly,  
For the last time through youthful haunts to roam,  
And snatch the breezes of my native sky.

Yes, dear New England! help me from thy breast  
To wean these childish yearnings, ere we part;  
Help me these chords to snap, these ties to wrest,  
So wound, and stamp'd, and woven in my heart.

A few more bounds along thy rocky shore,  
A few more pensive walks among thy streams,  
A few more greetings from dear friends of yore,  
A few more dreams—and then, no more of dreams——

Come, sacred, solid duty! at thy call,  
My cheerful will submissively shall flow,  
So thou, great Source of strength and light to all,  
Lead me the awful way my feet must go.

Teach me to bear the Christian Herald's part,  
To set the slaves of sin and error free,  
To guide each doubting, soothe each aching heart,  
And draw a listening, willing flock to Thee!

## REVIEW.

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### ARTICLE VII.

*An examination of the charges made against Unitarians and Unitarianism by the Right Rev. Dr. Magee, Bishop of Raphoe, in his discourses and dissertations on atonement and sacrifice.*  
By LANT CARPENTER, L.L.D. Bristol, [Eng.] 1820.

THE work of Dr. Magee on Atonement has acquired considerable reputation in this country, as well as in Great Britain, and by a numerous body of christians is regarded as of high authority. That it displays learning and ability, we are by no means disposed to deny: but it is written in a tone of dogmatism, which, with many, is taken for evidence of truth; and it will be found, that his assertions, as well as his arguments, require cautious examination. It is not, however, our intention to enter at all into the consideration of its merits as a theological treatise, or of the truth or error of the system, which it is intended to maintain. But widely as the work has been circulated, and triumphantly as it has been appealed to as an unanswerable defence of orthodoxy, it becomes a debt to justice to expose the gross misrepresentations and abuse both of the views and characters of that class of christians, who are now generally known as Unitarians. This is the design of Dr. Carpenter in the volume before us; a labour indeed sufficiently irksome and ungrateful, but which, we think, he has accomplished in a manner, which entirely vindicates the propriety and necessity of his undertaking it, and which, when we consider the constant provocation he must have found to a different spirit, is highly honourable to his meekness and forbearance.

"If the Dean of Cork,"\* says Dr. Carpenter, "is to be credited, the Unitarians as a body, and the avowed defenders of Unitarianism in particular, are destitute of every quality, which can render them deserving of attention. The opinion, which he pronounces of us, e cathedrâ, has been reverberated in every possible direction; his

\* It may be observed, that at the commencement of Dr. Carpenter's work, Dr. Magee was Dean of Cork; but before the publication of the whole of it, he was promoted to the Bishopric of Raphoe. This is noticed, to explain the different titles, by which he is distinguished in different parts of the volume.



statements have been resorted to as authority, and even the candid have sometimes been unwarily led astray by his representations, and supposing all that he says to be true and accurate, have thought themselves justified in warning others, lest they should be ensnared by our specious devices. That we are destitute of learning and science, of all the characteristics of a sound understanding, and every principle of piety and humility, and that we are therefore incompetent judges of christian truth—he has repeatedly said or insinuated; and he is believed by thousands, who have never witnessed the benignant influence of Unitarianism on the heart and life, who have never felt its invigorating, enlightening influence on the understanding, who have never examined for themselves the evidence adduced against us from our own writings, and still less perused our works, and weighed our arguments, with the disposition to know what we believe, and on what our faith is founded." p. 54.

Such is the general account given by Dr. Carpenter of the manner in which the Unitarians as a body are represented by Dr. Magee; and which he fully proves by numerous examples. "He has thought proper to speak of them in various places, indiscriminately and without exception, as if they were the insidious enemies of christianity and degraders of the Saviour. 'A conspiracy,' he says, 'the most deep and deadly has been formed against christianity; and its defenders are called upon, not merely to resist the avowed invader, who assails the citadel from without, but the *concealed and treacherous* foe, who undermines the works, or tampers with the garrison within.' "

Dr. Carpenter with a temperate, but most righteous indignation, repels these gross insinuations, and adds, "Lest any one, who has not read the discourses and dissertations of the Dean of Cork, should imagine that my strictures are marked with an un-called-for severity, I will give him another specimen or two of his abusive language. More will appear as we proceed."

"The modern Socinian, who calls himself Unitarian, is, under the name of Christian, the decided *enemy of Christianity*; and under the guise of a translator of the New Testament, a *deliberate falsifier* of the Gospel."—*Dr. Magee's Postscript*, p. 365.

And in reference to certain objectionable expressions of some foreign critics, which he adduces to throw a stigma upon the English Unitarians, and in reply to the expressions of devout reverence for the scriptures, not more eloquent than sincere, which are frequent in the writings of the latter, he offers this most illiberal and indecent inquiry. "When, I say, all these things are considered, and when we find the Bible thus *contemned and rejected* by the gentlemen of this new light, and a new and more convenient gospel carved out for themselves, can the occasional *profession* of reverence for scripture as the word of

God, be treated in any other light, than as *a convenient mask, or as an insulting sneer.*"

We make no comments upon language of this kind. It is far below our indignation. We only adduce it as an example, among many, of the manner in which the author of the work on atonement has allowed himself to speak of a class of his fellow christians, who as a body have been excelled by none, for their laborious, faithful, conscientious investigation of the scriptures; who have shown their reverence for the word of God by lives consecrated to its study, and ennobled and adorned by the spirit it enjoins.

A writer, who undertakes to censure with so much vehemence, the characters and views of a whole class of men, especially of his fellow christians, is bound to possess himself with the most accurate knowledge of the facts, on which he grounds his charges. Yet from want of this, Dr. Magee is betrayed into the grossest misrepresentations; and sometimes leaves to candour itself no other alternative, but that of ascribing to pure ignorance what could not otherwise escape a much more serious accusation. Several examples of this are given by Dr. Carpenter; [see particularly pages 105—112.] But ignorance is not to be pleaded as an apology for calumny. The law of charity is not to be violated with impunity, because a man's indolence or prejudice prevent his knowing the truth; and in one of the instances to which we have referred, even this poor excuse, it would seem, is precluded; for "on his own confession," (says Dr. Carpenter, after a statement of particulars,) "the Dean of Cork is convicted of bearing false testimony." p. 106.

One of the artifices, to which Dr. Magee frequently recurs, is assuming for fact, that Unitarians are fairly represented by two or three individuals, as Dr. Priestley or Mr. Belsham; and selecting some of the most objectionable passages to be found in their works, and exhibiting them as the sentiments of the whole body.

This artifice, however, has been too frequently employed to avail much in any cause with men of common discernment or candour. "But what renders it here," says Dr. Carpenter, "peculiarly disingenuous, is that Mr. Belsham expressly disavows the station assigned him by his adversaries as organ of the sect." In the third edition of his Review (1813) in a preface, containing the author's reply to animadversions upon this Review, and of the existence of which Dean Magee could scarcely be ignorant, Mr. Belsham explicitly states, "The writer of these Letters has no authority or desire to represent himself as the organ of any party or denomination of christians. He expresses his own sentiments explicitly and without reserve; and he trusts



calmly and candidly. *No society, nor any individual, are in the slightest degree responsible for any thing which he has written.*"

On this subject, so often misunderstood or mistated, we think it proper here to remark. It will hardly be supposed, that christians, whose distinguishing peculiarity is the rejection of human authority in matters of religion, should rest with a blind confidence on the opinions of any of their fellow-christians, or that, holding sacred the injunction "to call no man Master upon earth," they should admit that their views could be fully represented by the views of any individual whatever. Unitarians profess to think and judge for themselves; and while they agree in the grand distinguishing doctrine of the complete unity and unrivalled supremacy of the only wise, living, and true God, there exists on many other subjects a considerable diversity of sentiment. There are many, who differ wholly from Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham in their views of the person of Christ, and the nature of his mediation: and there are many too, who, in general according with these gentlemen, are far from approving the expressions they have sometimes unhappily employed. We can all honour their labours, their talents, and virtues, (for they are many and great) while we reject some of their speculations, and regret the evil, that in some of their writings may be mingled with their good.

It is in his remarks upon some of the works of these gentlemen, and particularly of Dr. Priestley, that Dr. Magee has indulged to the extent his unfairness and illiberality. By mangled quotations, by affixing a meaning to the most important word, different from the author's meaning; by giving his own representation of the author's words, *when he professes to give the words themselves; connecting distant and divided sentences into one quotation;*—by these and similar artifices he has contrived to violate the simplest principles of controversial, and even common equity.

We will now offer a few, out of the multitude of examples which Dr. Carpenter has adduced, to substantiate his charges against Dr. Magee of gross inaccuracy, ignorance of facts on which he grounds his accusations, and wilful misrepresentation. We use this last, rather than a harsher term, because we fear our limits may not admit of presenting the proofs with the minute details, which such an investigation seems in justice to the party accused to demand. But should our readers go over, as we have done, the whole work of Dr. Carpenter, they would see for themselves, that the proper charge to meet the demerits of this celebrated dignitary would be, not ignorance, not inaccuracy, not prejudice only, but deliberate falsehood.

The Dean of Cork often betrays the utmost ignorance of the circumstances and sentiments of the Unitarian body: and "I will cite one instance," says Dr. Carpenter, "which will show how destitute of authority his work is, though it is considered as of great authority, and numbers form by it their opinions respecting Unitarians, as well as Unitarianism.

"A Pamphlet was circulated by the Glasgow Unitarian Fund, entitled, an 'Address to the Inquirers after Truth,' &c. This tract was reprinted in the Monthly Repository in London for August 1813, with a short account of its origin by the editor, and expressions indicating his appreciation of its merits. On these circumstances Dr. Magee founds the following statement:

"I am the more disposed to make some observations upon this pamphlet, because as far as I know, it contains the only defence of the Improved Version, that has been offered to the public in a detached form; and because the BODY of ENGLISH Unitarians have attributed to it so high a value, that not content with printing or circulating it AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PUBLIC FUND, they have superadded the publication of it in *their Magazine*; thus securing to it every degree of currency and credit, that it is the power of the *Entire Body* to bestow. *Recognized and adopted in this manner by the WHOLE COMMUNITY of Unitarians*, it is of course to be viewed as THEIR OWN authenticated and deliberate defence.' &c.—*Postscript*, p. 9.

"If the Dean can produce," says Dr. Carpenter, "from the least esteemed of our writers, a passage parallel to this, in false reasoning and misrepresentation, he will throw greater discredit on us, than any evidence he has yet produced can warrant. For

"(I.) The GLASGOW Unitarian Fund print and circulate the address. From this fact, *the evidence of which is in the title page*, the Dean asserts that the BODY of English Unitarians have printed and circulated it at the expense of their Public Fund.

"(II.) The editor of the Monthly Repository, an individual, responsible to no one in the conducting of the Repository, and *never acting in the name of the Unitarian body*, but only for himself, thinks highly of the address, inserted it in his Journal. On this fact, and this alone, the Dean of Cork declares, that the BODY of English Unitarians published the address in their Magazine; and by this means (in which they had no concern) securing to the tract every degree of credit, that it is in the power of the ENTIRE BODY to bestow.

"(III.) Upon the groundless assumptions, already stated, the Dean proceeds to maintain, that the address having been THUS recognized and adopted by the whole community of Unitarians, it is, *of course, to be viewed as their own authenticated and deliberate defence.*"—The Tract was written by an *individual*, and the body never deliberated on the subject; and after it had been printed by a *very small part* of that body, the Glasgow Unitarian Fund, it was reprinted by *another individual*, who was responsible to no one but himself. And therefore, reasons the Dean, being thus recognized, &c.—*Q. E. D.*" pages 109. 111.



Again, a notable specimen of this author's random sweeping censures occurs in his Postscript, p. 48. Having quoted some passages from Locke, to show that this eminent philosopher held views respecting the nature of Christ, which differ materially from those of the believers in his simple humanity, and another from Grotius, which few Unitarians would hesitate to employ, he asks, "What will be the reader's reflexions, when he learns that Mr. Belsham, Dr. Carpenter, and all their UNITARIAN FELLOW-LABOURERS claim these very writers as CONCURRING in *their* opinions concerning the mere human nature of Christ, and unblushingly assert this IN EVERY PUBLICATION."

"What, I would ask in return," says Dr. Carpenter, "will be his reflexions, when he learns that the *whole sentence is a tissue of false assertions. It is not true*, that Mr. Belsham ever claimed Grotius as concurring in his opinions touching the mere human nature of Christ. *It is not true*, that Dr. Carpenter ever claimed either Grotius or Locke, as concurring with him in those opinions. *It is not true*, that all their fellow-labourers do so. *It is not true*, that we do so in every publication." And for these assertions Dr. Carpenter appeals to their writings, and adds, "I will not attribute the falsehoods in the above quotation, to any thing but an unfortunate confusion of mind, produced by blind party-zeal and personal resentment; but I say, that when a man can write thus, he forfeits all claim to unsuspecting reliance on his assertions, and ceases to be a credible witness in the controversy." p. 115 note.

We have already mentioned the unfairness and illiberality of Dr. Magee in his treatment of Dr. Priestley. It would be difficult within the limits of this article to set before our readers the various evidence, by which Dr. Carpenter establishes this charge, as it is derived from a minute comparison of different quotations from the two authors. Having shown, however, and we think to the entire satisfaction of every one, who will peruse the extracts with common attention, that the sense in which Dr. Priestley uses the word "*atonement*" is in its *highest sense*, as equivalent with *satisfaction*, and especially when speaking of the "commonly received doctrine of atonement;" referring to it as to the notion of a "full satisfaction having been made to the offended God;" of an "equivalent satisfaction;" and of the "inability of God to pardon without an adequate satisfaction to his justice and the honour of his laws and government;" having shown, we say, by various proofs, that this is the only notion of atonement which Dr. Priestley combats, Dr. Carpenter remarks:

"Now the injustice of the Dean of Cork, and it is great, consists in this, that *knowing, as he could not but know*, the facts which I have stated, and himself (we beg our reader's attention to this point) him-

*self attaching to the term atonement a notion so little in opposition to Unitarianism, that an Unitarian may embrace it (as far as it is intelligible) without relinquishing his fundamental principle—he represents Dr. Priestley as arguing against this notion, against which he never does argue, and appreciates the value of all his arguments and positions by this standard of his own setting up.”* p. 159.

In other words, the Dean of Cork declares, that Dr. Priestley opposes the doctrine of redemption by Christ,—though he held it and laid great stress upon it, in what he believed to be the scriptural sense of the term; altogether neglects Dr. Priestley's own explication of the term *atonement*; attaches to it one, in which as he must know, Dr. Priestley did not use it; and represents him as opposing the doctrine of *atonement* in the latter sense, when he knew that his arguments and statements all respected it in the former.

We might add to these several examples of *unfair quotation*. And it would seem indeed that the Dean might have been contented with taking words out of their connexion, or with omitting part of a sentence. But that he should *quote as Dr. Priestley's words what Dr. Priestley does not say*, one would have supposed impossible. This however he has done; and in the passage to which we refer, “has been guilty of two gross breaches of controversial equity. The first is, that the former clause which gives a peculiar colour to the second, *no where occurs in the Essay from which it is said to be taken*, though it is represented according to the Dean's own canon, [with respect to inverted commas as marks of quotation] as occurring in immediate continuity with the following clause;” and the second is, a repetition of the artifice we have already exposed.

We pass to one example—and it is the only one we select—of misrepresentation of Mr. Belsham.

“With an injustice,” says Dr. Carpenter, “which is perhaps unrivalled in recent controversy, Dr. Magee asserts, that Mr. Belsham rejects the notion of prayer; making man, as it were, independent of his Maker. This charge was made in the first edition of the ‘Discourses and dissertations;’ and it has been repeated in each succeeding edition.” p. 403.

We have before advanced what we deemed proper, as to our decided dissent from many of the views of Mr. Belsham. Dr. Magee had an undoubted right to express his disapprobation, and had he confined himself to this, we should have found no cause for censure. But when, with a total disregard of all decency and truth, he presumes to place this gentleman, distinguished for the singular purity and integrity of his character, “among the unhappy blasphemers of the majesty of the Son of God,” (*Postscript*, p. 30.;)



attributes to him "artifice and dishonesty," [p. 259.]; "bad faith, unchecked by learning, and unabashed by shame," [p. 262.]; and "*direct violations of known truth*;" [p. 311.] and, on statements principally respecting Mr. Belsham, ascribes to Unitarian writers the "calm and deliberate purpose of falsifying the word of God;" [p. 113.] we cannot waste contempt on such an antagonist, but will only in compassion remind him, that the day is coming, when for such malignant and outrageous calumny, he must render his account to God.

But the charge that Mr. Belsham rejects the notion of prayer, it should be remembered, is made against one, who in conducting the religious services of a christian congregation, performs the stated worship of the place in the substance of the Liturgy of the church of England, improved according to the plan of Dr. Samuel Clarke; against one who has published several prayers, delivered on particular occasions, "and which," says Dr. Carpenter, "if the Lord's prayer be admitted as the Christian's model of adoration and supplication, will bear a close comparison with the devout effusions of any modern writer:" against the author of several practical discourses before the public, which manifest the sentiments of rational, enlarged, and elevated piety: and in whose other writings, not solely controversial, striking indications occur of strong pervading religious principle: finally, this accusation of rejecting the notion of prayer is made against the individual, in whose charge at the ordination of a friend, we find a passage, like the following. Let it stand as an answer to the unprincipled calumny of Bishop Magee.

"And O, what will be the temper and conduct of that Minister, who sets God always before him; who in every action of his life and ministry, doth, as it were, behold the eye of the Supreme Being fixed steadily and invariably upon him for purposes the most interesting, the most awful, the most encouraging; to pity, to guide, and to succour under every difficulty; to aid every generous exertion, and to mark and frown upon every wilful neglect of duty. Under such impressions, with what earnest solicitude will a minister prepare for the duties of his office, that he may not in the sight of God, do or speak any thing unworthy of his character, that he may not offer the sacrifice of fools, or utter crude and indigested rambles in the name and in the presence of God! With what plainness and freedom, with what fortitude, with what dignity and energy, with what infinite superiority to mean and secular views, with what indifference to human applause, with what unconcern as to personal consequences, will he declare *the whole counsel of God*; not daring to conceal what he believes to be important, that so he may be clear from the blood of all men. With what diligence will he seek, with what eagerness will he embrace every opportunity of promoting the

great ends of his ministry; instructing the ignorant, reclaiming the vicious, recovering the wanderer to the paths of wisdom and virtue, administering consolation to the afflicted, confirming and establishing the sincere Christian. How will the apprehension of the divine inspection rouse him to unremitting exertions, whatever difficulties he may meet with, whatever temptations to negligence and supineness, with whatever indifference or neglect his services may be treated, whatever ungrateful treatment he may receive, or how little soever his apparent success may be! And what a tendency will this persuasion have to engage the Christian Minister often *to lift up his heart in devout aspirations after a divine assistance and blessing, and to ascribe all that is good in himself, and all the success of his ministry, to the favour of the Almighty.* Rejoicing in the confidence of having laboured faithfully, abundantly, and successfully, he will humbly and thankfully add, Yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.

"I cannot then, Sir, conclude with a better advice or wish to you than this, that *you would set the Lord always before you*, and that in the whole course of your ministry, you would study *to approve yourself to God*, to glorify his name and accomplish his will."

In addition to this admirable passage, we can only refer our readers to some forms of prayer in Mr. Belsham's "Plea for Infant Baptism," and will then ask, "Is this the language of a man, who rejects the notion of prayer?"

We will add no more to the proofs already adduced. They might easily be multiplied; though as the author of the work before us remarks, "It is one of the worst features in the controversial system Dr. Magee has adopted, that his misrepresentations are frequently so subtle, and his perversion of our arguments so refined, that what occupies him perhaps only a few lines, may require pages to develope; and that some of his most injurious charges wear the form of insinuation." Our readers will at least perceive, that if they would learn the views of Unitarians, they must rely on other testimony than that of Dr. Magee. In truth, he is not to be trusted: and we are utterly astonished, that a man, holding for years a most responsible station in the education of youth, designing his work especially for the use of students of divinity, and since promoted to one of the highest dignities in a rich and powerful church, should have descended to artifices, which in the common intercourse of life, and estimated by the lowest standard of integrity, would be regarded only as base and dishonourable. We can admit some allowances for vanity, some for prejudice, some for the spirit of party, and some for a dignitary's contempt of a dissenter. But charity itself knows no apology for wilful misrepresentation. Religion disdains it; error cannot long be sustained by it; and when the tumults of controversy are past, and the voice of con-



science is heard, we believe his Lordship will not congratulate himself on this portion of his labours, though they may have purchased for him the honours of a mitre.

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ARTICLE VIII.

*Report of the Board of Counsel to the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, presented at their Eighth Anniversary, June 2, 1820. Boston: Sewell Phelps, pp. 20.*

WE presume that no apology is necessary for again bringing the subject of the suppression of intemperance before our readers. It loses none of its importance, and ought therefore to lose none of its interest from being repeatedly and earnestly pressed upon the notice of the public. Indeed the more there is known and written of it, the more worthy does it seem to excite the attention, not merely of those who have the good of mankind at heart simply from motives of benevolence, from a love of virtue and a desire of seeing all their fellow-creatures happy, but of those also, who look upon virtue and vice in a more philosophical and calculating point of view, as affecting the constitution of society, the institutions of government, the foundations of public confidence; as elements entering into the composition of political character, and of course influencing political establishments.

It is not now necessary to say any thing to set the facts on this subject in their true light. This has been already done repeatedly in the most satisfactory manner. The extent, the progress, the causes and the consequences of intemperance have been sufficiently developed. We are fully aware of the magnitude of the evil, and of the imperious necessity of devising and adopting efficient measures for its removal. The inquiry only remains—what are these measures? This inquiry is one of great moment, and involves a variety of considerations.

The means which may be used to deter mankind from becoming addicted to any species of vice, or for reforming such as are already its subjects, are of two general kinds:—1. Those which operate by a direct appeal to the moral feelings of the individual; which are addressed to his conscience, his sense of right and wrong, his responsibility as an accountable being, his regard for religion, and for the dignity of his own nature; and 2. Those whose influence is upon more extrinsic and external considerations, which are enforced by law, by threats of civil punishment, by the fear of disgrace, of public contempt, by the loss of rank, wealth or reputation. These different means of reformation, it

must be obvious, are applicable, in the first instance, to men of very different characters, who have arrived at various stages in the career of vice. Those of the first kind, cannot have their due effect, except upon individuals who are still possessed of some delicacy of moral feeling, some susceptibility to moral impressions; for it is only through these that we can expect to amend the life by improving the internal character. Where these are obliterated, we must have recourse to those different measures which enable us to prevent crime by the arm of external power; and thus, through that indirect influence, to which human nature is always susceptible, correct bad habits and restrain evil passions, by checking their actual exercise.

Some crimes have been thought to be more properly the subjects of legal interference than others, and have been in consequence vigilantly watched by public authority, and efficient measures taken for their regular detection and punishment. These have been generally such as directly affect the security of life, of property, of personal rights, or the institutions of society. There are others which seem to have been thought the concern rather of the individual than of the public; their immediate bad effects relating to himself, his own character and situation, it has been judged right to leave them to be taken cognizance of by his own conscience, or to commit them to the operation of those moral means to which we have alluded. It is true, laws have been sometimes made with a direct view to the punishment of vices of this class, since, although primarily affecting only the character of the individual, their ultimate effect is always to encourage and promote crimes of the other stamp. But the difficulty with regard to these laws always has been, that they have not been so met and supported by public opinion, as to ensure their effectual execution. There is, in every one, a certain jealousy of public scrutiny into the minute details of private life. Men have the feeling that their characters are their own property, that their virtues and their vices are wholly their own, so far as they do not interfere with the regularity of society, that the world has no more right to controul, or even to inspect them, in the indulgence of inclinations where the consequences affect only themselves, than they have to dictate the course of their thoughts and lay down laws to govern the associations of their ideas.

In devising means for the suppression of intemperance, we are to judge of the comparative efficacy of these two methods of procedure; and it is not difficult to see, that in this particular instance, both may be probably employed with advantage, if each is properly adapted to those cases and characters on which it is calculated to have an influence. They must be applied to diffe-



rent individuals, according to the different stages at which they have arrived in their career of vice. Moral means can only be expected to operate when the habit is just forming, or when there is merely a tendency towards its formation; before that, which is at first a propensity, shall have been converted into a necessity; before the body has become tainted with disease, or the mind obdurate by custom. But even in the earliest periods, it is melancholy to know how little can be done by these means *alone*; and it is in fact only in the way of prevention that we are to expect much from them. In that way, however, they are capable of rendering the most valuable service. We can arm those against temptation, whom we could not rescue were they already involved in its toils; for if they have once yielded, like the wretched victim of the fascinations of the serpent, their struggles, their resistance are in vain; dragged on by an irresistible impulse, which seems like one of the inevitable laws of nature, they are plunged into a gulf, from which there is no escape, and beyond which there is no hope.

Even those measures which depend for their influence upon external considerations, although applicable in some degree to subjects of every class, must yet have their *principal* effect upon those who are novices in crime, who are not absolutely hardened by habit, but only on the verge of the ruin which is prepared for them. A confirmed drunkard is irreclaimable; and it is fortunate, that in this state his example has ceased to be pernicious. So far as it has any influence, it must rather tend to deter than to invite. It is the cheerful, the social stage of intemperance which has such attractions, and is so dreadfully contagious. A thorough sot is at once the most loathsome, the most despised and the most miserable wretch, that crawls between earth and heaven. The vice in him has lost its jovial and mirth-inspiring character; it is no longer a delicious and luxurious enjoyment, but the selfish gratification of a debased animal propensity. He seeks not and finds not satisfaction in his indulgencies, but a mere respite from suffering. Excess has fixed a worm in his heart, which gnaws upon the very seat of life; whose cravings can only be appeased by draughts, to which he turns like the victim of a fever, to quench, but for a moment, the thirst by which he is consumed, and cheat a short relief from intolerable agony. His life is a dreary waste—a waste he has himself created—through which he wanders as if possessed by some terrible demon; a restless, discontented being, with but one passion to gratify, and that gratification his slow but certain destruction. How horrible an existence! capable of receiving even a moment's miserable enjoyment but from one source, and every in-

dulgence bringing him one step nearer to that grave, which is opening, to close upon him in infamy and disgrace.

On such an individual, it seems almost certain, that the restraints of the law can produce no permanent amendment of character; but if judiciously framed, perseveringly executed and supported by public opinion, we conceive that their influence may be made considerable upon the less obdurate, and of great importance in preventing others, not yet contaminated, from becoming victims to the same habit. This subject has been taken up in an able and interesting manner by the Board of Counsel of the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, in their Report for the present year. This paper enters into a detail of the laws which have been made at different times for the prevention of intemperance and the punishment of the intemperate; and considers the propriety and probable efficacy of this method of procedure. We propose to give an abstract of this excellent report; and in doing it shall avail ourselves largely of its language, confident that we can offer nothing on this subject so worthy of attention.

We are presented, in the first place, with a comparative view of the ancient and modern laws. In the mother country it seems that laws have existed for nearly six centuries; so that, even at so distant a period, legislative interference had become necessary and was judged expedient. Revisions of these laws were made from time to time; and at about the period of the emigration of our ancestors to this country, a statute was established, providing punishment by fine or setting in the stocks for those who were guilty of being drunk. This law invariably considered and treated drunkenness as an indictable offence; a crime in itself, and punished it as such.

The same feature is prominent in the laws which were made in Massachusetts, while a colony, for the same purposes. They were occupied chiefly with provisions for the detection and punishment of persons guilty of intemperance, and they prescribe the mode in which these provisions are to be carried into effect, making it the specific duty of particular individuals to interest themselves in their execution.

"In all these English, Colony and Province laws," says the Report, "there are two provisions, constituting their essence, not found in our modern or Commonwealth laws on this subject. 1. The former, as already observed, treated drunkenness and excessive drinking as an offence *in itself* against law, and punishable by indictment, without regard to consequences. 2. They made informing of the offence a duty by law, and in 1712 gave the selectmen a power to appoint discreet informers, and reasonably and honourably to reward them; whereas



our Commonwealth or present laws do not generally punish, or even restrain a person guilty of the offence of *being drunk*, or of *drinking to excess*—except, 1. a *common* drunkard; 2. those who by *excessive* drinking *greatly injure their health*, or *endanger the loss of it*;—and 3. those who by *excessive* drinking *so lessen their estates, as thereby, with their families, to be exposed to want or to be a town charge*. In these three cases only, it is conceived, do our present laws punish or restrain the offence of intemperance, when committed not in a *licensed* house or place. (The laws as to licensed houses affect only intemperance *in them*, and licensed persons.) Therefore if a man is cautious enough not to be intemperate in a licensed house or place; not to be a common drunkard; not to drink so *excessively* as to injure his health, or not so *excessively* as to expose himself and family to want, or to be a town charge, he is not liable to legal punishment or even to legal restraints, though otherwise ever so intemperate. Now when a person is within any one of these three cases, he is, almost invariably, past reformation. Thus the old laws took the intemperate man in hand the first time he was drunk; the present law generally not till he is past being reclaimed. The old law made it a duty to inform, and properly encouraged the informer; the new, in most cases, leaves the execution to *volunteer* informations—very unpleasant and unpopular. Our present laws affix specific penalties to other immoralities, but none to drunkenness.” p. 5.

“Several material questions here arise. First, was the principle of the ancient law a sound principle, that punished the man, as *criminal*, the first time he was drunk voluntarily, and so as to be proved in a legal manner? Surely if a person thus openly and voluntarily unfits himself to perform every duty, social, moral and religious, and enters freely on a course to make himself detestable, and a burden to others, he must be considered guilty of an offence, which his country has a right to punish and restrain, and to prevent its repetition by suitable penalties—a self-destroying offence, without excuse, and of the most pernicious kind in society; and so it has been viewed by the most enlightened nations, ancient and modern.” p. 6.

We cannot doubt the correctness of this principle; if we do not act upon it, no measures we can adopt will avail us much. If we punish a man for his intemperance, only because it has brought degradation and disease upon himself, and poverty and misery on his family; if we wait to attack the cause of the mischief until all its evil consequences are produced, we may possibly have some influence on those who are yet free from the vice, but we cannot hope to reform him who is already under its sway. This is a cruel refinement of justice, by which we hesitate to prevent the cause from producing its effects when this can be done, but afterwards inflict a punishment because those effects ensue. How inhuman, how barbarous were it in the physician to withhold his remedies, even if they were harsh and painful, till disease had fastened upon the whole system, till the powers

of life were exhausted, and the means which might have once been successful, have lost their salutary influence. Yet this is the same policy as that which is pursued by our laws with regard to the intemperate; their effect is to tolerate, nay, almost encourage them, so long as repentance and reformation are possible, but when these are hopeless, the voice of public reproach, the harsh denunciations of the law are heard, but heard in vain.

"A second question arises. Is it not fit and proper to treat this vice of intemperance as our ancestors did, varying the manner of punishment according to circumstances? There can be no doubt but that the evils of intemperance are far greater now in our country, than they were in the times of the Colony and Province. Its pernicious effects and alarming extent have already been well described by this Society and others in some points of view; but they are yet to be considered in several others—to one of which in particular, the Board ask most serious attention; and that is, the manifest injustice done to all the virtuous part of the community, by suffering this vice to prevail as it does; producing a state of things in which, in fact, the virtuous are made slaves to the vicious in various ways. But few societies in our country, or even families, exist, which have not experienced, or do not experience, the pernicious effects of this vice of intemperance—their frugal and industrious, moral and virtuous members being constantly punished and afflicted by means of this brutal vice in other members. In all ages and countries it has been found, that this scourge of mankind will inevitably increase, as the means of indulgence increase, as the laws are lax, and as vice is connived at, either from a fear of too much infringing the citizens' civil and political liberty, or from any other cause. As to the easy obtainment of the means of intemperance, it is a fact, which merits serious attention, that in most parts of our country one day's labour furnishes the means of a week's gross intemperance. When such earnings are applied to the necessities and comforts of life, in a prudent way, every American may truly say, we live in a happy land; but when applied to extend this vice, he must regret that a day's labour affords the means of so many days of savage intemperance. View it only in relation to mere *pecuniary* interests and equal rights among fellow-citizens; what is produced by it but extreme injustice and a miserable waste of property, that ultimately falls on the prudent and industrious? as they, generally and almost of course, acquire and preserve property, and principally support the poor and bear the public burdens; and as the vicious and intemperate, generally and almost of course, are poor and pay but a trifling part of the public expenses. Besides, the latter are always drawing on the charity of the former, and if some, in fact, do not ask it, yet their wretched condition, and especially the unmerited sufferings of those they ought to provide for, ask it, in a manner which neither reason, or the best feelings of the virtuous, can resist.



"If this, upon the whole, be a true representation of the state of things in our country, and certainly it is in many parts of it, where is reason or justice, where are equal rights or correct feelings, when the laws scarcely notice intemperance but in its last stages, and when reformation is nearly hopeless? Where are even tender feelings of the weaker sort, where is humanity with judgment, when the intemperate head of a family can, year after year, undisturbed by law, make his innocent wife and children poor, mortified and wretched? In such cases, misery seems to be made the portion of the innocent, and the guilty one does as he pleases and goes free. We not only see in every place the hard earnings of industry and of correct habits applied, by a sort of necessity, to support the intemperate, or those ruined by intemperance; but we see also life destroyed by it in numerous instances. As intemperate men lose all sense of character and of country, they become the worst sort of population in a free state. Their vice begets poverty; 'poverty enforces dependence, and dependence increases corruption.' The maxim which Homer applied to the slave, more forcibly applies to them. No other vice so much as intemperance destroys the mind." pp. 7, 8.

"A third question occurs. Can any more effectual means be adopted to check and restrain this vice? and must not these means be efficient laws, well executed, public opinion, and good examples? Certain it is, these were the means our ancestors adopted in the days of our colonies and provinces, when there was much less intemperance than there now is. One reason, also, was that public opinion, and public officers had much more influence than they now have. Perhaps they had less fear of the influence of the vicious in popular elections.

"In the best of times and among the best of men, to *prosecute*, however necessary, is always unpleasant, and usually unpopular. It is then a just sense of *duty* that must guide public officers and reflecting citizens in the right way. When it is a disagreeable business to restrain or punish the vicious, it is to be recollected they are continually punishing the virtuous, in different ways; and often those whom they are bound, on every principle, kindly to protect and support. Let good sense, sound reflexions, and just views of right and wrong, bring public officers and thinking men to the true sense of duty, in addition to friendly advice and good examples, and we may be reasonably assured this all corrupting vice will be decreased from year to year. The law must watch and check it in time, before one is settled down a *common* drunkard, or greatly endangers his health, or is on the verge of pauperism. But good laws avail but little, if no one can feel their operation till complained against by *volunteer* complainants, and such are hardly to be expected. It is much easier to enact good laws to suppress vice, than to execute them well." p. 9.

"Our ancestors deemed it wise, and perhaps we shall on further experience, to make *informing* the official and positive duty of certain

judicious and discreet persons. When men feel impelled by duty and the positive injunctions of law, they are not so fearful of being thought forward, intrusive or assuming; and they are much less obnoxious than mere *volunteer* informers. Make it a man's positive duty, by law, to act in a certain manner, and public resentment will but rarely fall on him; but if it fall any where, it will be on the law itself, an event that scarcely ever happens, for obvious reasons; one, that the law is the act of the whole people and has a solemn sanction in all respects." p. 10.

The fourth inquiry relates principally to the degree of probability which exists, that any good can probably be done by the measures employed for the suppression of the habit of intoxication. The Board appear to be sanguine in the belief, "that much has been lately done, that much is doing, and that much can be done to lessen the evils of intemperance." Though they do not believe, "that any human means can entirely suppress these evils; yet they do believe, that it is in the power of the wise and virtuous of the state or nation, very much to restrain and diminish them, and by exertions no greater than they have often made."

"No doubt this is a work of time, of patience, and of perseverance, which ever commences in true and extensive information, in correct views of the mischiefs or oppressions to be removed. Instances in proof need not be stated—they will be recollected. For several years past, every month has afforded evidence to confirm this reasoning on the subject in question, not only in the ways above stated, but many men of high standing have, within the ten last years, engaged with zeal in effecting the reformation we are attempting, thinking the importance of the cause calls for their exertions; that the pernicious evils of intemperance must be circumscribed. Hence respectable committees in New York, Philadelphia and other places have, of late years, commenced their assiduous inquiries to ascertain their true extent, and to suppress or lessen them. Some legislatures have revised their laws on the subject. A late President of the United States has more than once employed his pen on the subject, which also has lately engaged the attention of the Governour of New York, who in his speech to her legislature, urged them to pass 'some law to prevent the habitual drunkard from exhibiting in public the odious vice of drunkenness, and by its frequency rendering it less detestable, and to restrain him from wasting his property, and thereby bringing his family, for whom he is bound to provide by the strongest obligations, to want and wretchedness.' 'As auxiliary to the end,' he recommended 'that all accounts or contracts for ardent spirits, by retail, should not be recoverable by law.' Also the legislature of Vermont, a little time since, appointed a committee composed of the governour, lieutenant governour, other principal officers of the government, and respectable individuals, residing in



different parts of the state, for the purpose of suppressing intemperance. Another state has wisely forbidden justices of the peace to hold their courts in taverns. Among the able individuals, who have written to promote these important purposes, we are pleased to see one writing in the *North American Review*, who says, 'Nor do we think it easy to ascribe too much mischief to the growing evil of intoxication.' 'Go where you will you cannot escape the sight of this destroyer of domestic peace and public virtue.' 'It is boldly alleged as the excuse of crimes, and there is no transgression, for which the offender does not think that he has sufficiently apologized, when he says, that he was intoxicated.' 'The effectual remedy is a purer state of morals, generally diffused. 'A heavy tax,' says he, 'upon domestic as well as foreign spirits, is a remedy from which most is to be hoped; but unhappily it is too much opposed by considerations of private interest, and a love of popularity in rulers, to leave much expectation of its being speedily adopted.' " p. 13, 14.

One thing, at least, has been the effect of the attention which has been excited in the community to the present subject, they are less averse to adopt measures for the removal of the evil, and more convinced of the possibility of effecting something by strenuous and persevering exertion. There has been, it appears to us, a prevalent feeling that little is to be expected from human means towards the improvement of the state of morals or religion among mankind. This feeling is wearing away; we are no longer willing to sit down contented with doing nothing, because we believe nothing can be effected. We have become ready to try the experiment at least, satisfied to lose our endeavours in a good cause, if Providence does not see fit to bless them with success. The Report proceeds,

"Having considered, as far as our limits will permit, the laws and public opinion on this subject, and what has been done, is doing, and probably may and will be done on general principles, for the suppression of intemperance, one further inquiry only at present remains—that is, What further laws may be advisedly enacted, as the public mind shall be prepared, from time to time, to receive them and favour their execution?

"We believe that laws may be prudently enacted, from time to time, and with a proper regard to our state of society, to the following purposes—and that such laws will be useful and effectual for circumscribing the evils of intemperance. 1. Laws which shall diminish very much the quantity of ardent spirits, that shall be obtainable at any rate; as laws prohibiting or essentially limiting the distillation of grain, &c. 2. Laws that shall greatly raise the price of such ardent spirits as shall be obtainable or for sale; as increasing the duties on those imported, on those distilled or produced at home, and on all licenses for selling them. 3. Laws which shall very much reduce the number of such licenses. 4. Laws confining licenses to

persons of unquestionably good moral character, and who shall give ample security for conforming to the laws. 5. Laws which shall punish, as the English and Colony laws did, drunkenness as an offence *in itself* against law, when proved in such manner as shall be prescribed. 6. Laws that shall expressly make it the duty of selectmen to appoint discreet and prudent men, whose business shall be to complain of breaches of the laws against intemperance, and such other vices as shall be specified, with reasonable compensations for their services. 7. Laws which shall expressly enjoin selectmen to meet at stated periods appointed in the laws, to have the informers before them when so assembled, and to make strict inquiries if licensed persons have in all things conformed to the laws. 8. Laws which shall expressly enjoin the Courts of Sessions to limit their licences to the number clearly necessary in each town, and carefully to examine the moral character of each person licensed, and his qualifications for his employment—or perhaps, which shall even go further, and prohibit the granting of more than a certain number of licenses to a fixed number of inhabitants. 9. Laws giving guardians such power over the persons, as well as estates of their intemperate wards, as shall be necessary effectually to prevent them from obtaining the means of intoxication.

“With regard to these suggestions it may be observed, that as we only state principles whereon to frame laws, so it may be observed, that these principles are not new, but that they have been the groundwork of statutes for the suppression of vice, practised upon in many countries, ancient and modern, especially by our ancestors, and at different times and in various places in this country. In numerous cases, statute laws have forbidden grain to be distilled into ardent spirits—in other words, the bread of the people to be converted into what is, too often, their poison and their moral destroyer. So in numerous cases, statute laws have been enacted, not only for raising revenue upon ardent spirits, but also to make them scarce, in order to aid the cause of good government, morality and religion; and to benefit labouring people especially, by keeping what is too often their ruin, in a good measure out of their reach. If any still believe ardent spirits to be necessary for labouring men, or beneficial to them, let a fair comparison be made among our farmers in the same town, between those who have used little or none of them, and those who have used them freely, and it will be seen that the former have ever enjoyed more health and vigour of constitution, especially in old age, than the latter. To establish this difference we need not say more, as it has been so fully proved already by this and other societies, as well as by many medical and other writers.” pp. 14—16.

Laws framed upon these principles would be admirably calculated for the purpose of reforming and restraining the intemperate; they would have all the effect which laws ever can have. In order to any beneficial and permanent influence, it appears



vitally important that the subject should be thoroughly attended to. If laws are made at all, they should be made upon a system; they should extend so as to embrace every case, and preclude every difficulty. They should form as distinct a department of public attention and legislation as the poor laws. Statutes should not be enacted, and then left to be executed by selectmen, justices, or constables, just as it may happen, without making it the duty of a particular individual. Such laws are never put in force—when any odium is attached to their execution—if the duty can be avoided by those on whom it falls. And that this is the case with regard to our laws as they exist at present, is sufficiently shown by the circumstance, that even such as they are, they in fact are not, and never can be executed, unless specific provision be made for that purpose.

We have overseers of the poor—why may we not have overseers of the intemperate? We have sheriffs, constables, and judges, whose business it is to exercise a guardianship over the public morals, and to detect and punish all crimes which are committed. The thief, the robber, the pickpocket do not often escape with impunity, for there are those whose office and interest it is to bring them to justice; and, what is very important, public opinion supports them in the performance of this duty. Why then should we not have officers whose specific business it might be to bring to justice the drunkard—a criminal of another class, it is true, but still a criminal. If it is worth while to have any laws at all, it is worth while to have good ones, and to have them well executed. Let the question be first fairly deliberated and determined, whether legal authority can interfere with any probability of success. If we conclude that it cannot, let the subject be forever dropped; let our laws, such as they are, be stricken from the statute book; for an ill-executed or insufficient law is a disgrace to the community, and far worse than none. If on the other hand, we believe that it can, let the enterprize be undertaken with spirit and zeal; it is certainly of sufficient importance to authorize an experiment of some magnitude, and at some expense. We do not know that there can be any serious objection to the scheme at which we have hinted,—the organization of a regular legal superintendence over the intemperate, carried out into detail in every part of the community. Let every man, who is known, or can be detected to be intemperate, come under the controul of a board established for this purpose; let him be deprived to a certain degree of his legal and personal rights; and let his property and the profits of his labour be under the direction of the board. Let this plan be so arranged as to exercise a constant guardianship over the community, keep a

strict watch over those who are in danger of falling into habits of intemperance, apply the remedy in the first instance, as soon as an individual becomes fairly the subject of it, and not wait with a mistaken lenity, till time has rendered him shameless and insensible to punishment. This duty should not be gratuitously performed; it ought to be made, if not the sole employment, at least a profitable one, to those who are engaged in it; the compensation ought to be sufficient to induce them to perform it faithfully. The servants of the public should always be paid, and well paid. It is ruinous to entrust the discharge of irksome, disagreeable, or unpopular offices to the public spirit of those who fill them. It is true we may find some men, who would do their duty perfectly, prompted by this motive alone; but such men are very few. And it is difficult to censure or to punish an individual for neglecting a business, for the faithful accomplishment of which he would at best get only empty thanks, and more probably would have to encounter hatred or insult.

This, it is obvious, is but a sketch of what such a system should be, if it be attempted at all; we have no hopes, except from a thorough plan, thoroughly executed. We are aware that strong opposition would exist to any thing of this nature; that it would excite the most determined resistance of probably a majority of the community; that there would be no prospect of carrying it immediately or soon into operation; that there would be serious doubts of its practicability, and that the good to be derived from it would be long in coming to light; so long, indeed, as perhaps to discourage many of those who might at first be sanguine in their expectations of success. Still we ought not to be deterred, by any such unfavourable circumstances, from ensuring to the subject a fair examination. Time may do much, we know how much it has already done, towards producing such a change in public opinion, as should tolerate a system like that which has been suggested.

Public opinion is, after all that can be said, the foundation on which we are to build our hopes of success; because if this do not support a design, it never can have a favourable issue. Temporary circumstances may induce a legislature to frame laws, which are not in consonance with the general spirit of the people; but no policy, no system, no institutions, which depend upon a legislature, can be permanently established or carried successfully into operation, if they contradict the inclinations, the prejudices, or the passions of a community at large. Now it is not politic to attempt measures of a novel nature, and carry them through by an influence which merely operates on the mind of the legislator, and does not carry conviction to his con-



stituents. This would be to ensure defeat in the end, and defeat of the worst kind, for it would have all the appearance of failure; and those consequences would be attributed to the defects of the plan itself, which were in fact owing to the injudicious zeal of its friends. It is always in the power of the people to effect the repeal of any law, or system of laws, which are obnoxious to a fair majority of them; so that if any measures are taken, and any laws enacted, before the people are prepared to receive and support them, we may be sure that defeat will necessarily ensue.

It is necessary to exercise great caution on this very delicate point of legal interference with private vices; to make sure of the support of that part of the community, the want of whose support would be fatal, before attempting any such innovations in established customs, as shall shock violently the prejudices of the mass of society. We are apt sometimes to feel as if no terms were to be held with the vicious; that it was our duty to attack them, at once, in all our strength; that a slow, deliberate, cautious policy was unworthy of the zeal we ought to manifest in the cause of virtue. Bold and decided measures ought undoubtedly to be taken; yet these are perfectly consistent with a cautious and prudent manner of carrying them into effect. We ought to be sure of every step as we advance. A plan may be bold and daring in its conception, and yet be put in operation with slowness and deliberation.

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## INTELLIGENCE.

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*Letters of a Native Christian of Madras.*—We have seen two letters, written at different times by William Roberts,\* a native Unitarian christian of Madras, which seem to us to afford a very interesting and encouraging example of the *Force of truth*, a few extracts from which we think will be acceptable to our readers. In the first (Dec. 25, 1816) he states,

That he is a native of the Carnatick, a descendant of Tamul or Malabar heathen parents, of very indigent circumstances, who taught him to read and write a little of his mother language. In the disturbances of Hyder Ally, in 1780, both his father and mother died, which misfortune drove him to utmost want and distress. He was soon taken and sold as a slave, in which state he

\* Addressed to "the London Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the practice of virtue by the distribution of books."

lived for some years with various fortunes. He at length went to England, and while in London, he says, "with the assistance of one by the name of Butler, (an African,) I got myself baptized in St. James's church, which is between Pall-Mall and Piccadilly, on the 3d of August, 1789, and named William Roberts, being then about eighteen years old. The first thing after my baptism I bought a Common Prayer Book of the Church of England and a New Testament." He afterwards returned to Madras, as servant to George Hoar, Esq.

"Now, from the first, my chief motive for endeavouring to learn to read English was to read the Bible to my own satisfaction. I had no other books but the Bible and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England; these were my friends, and the writers of them my instructors. As at this time I had no friends or acquaintance, being quite a stranger at Madras, I was at all times in my master's house. Whenever I had leisure the Bible was in my hands. The first thing that struck me and I stumbled at, was the Creed of St. Athanasius, in the Common Prayer Book. Three persons of the same power and attributes, each separately God and Lord, yet altogether no more than one God, was a thing too hard for me to make any thing of. The next thing was that of offering glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: in the answer to which it is said, "As it was in the beginning." Nothing of this kind is to be seen in the prayers of the greatest saints of the Scriptures which are recorded in the Bible.—These thoughts very often came across my mind, and cooled the ardour of my study. Sometimes I thought within myself that these difficulties arose from my not understanding the English language rightly; and that if I once understood the English language rightly, most probably these differences will be no more; for I had not yet then seen the Bible in my own language, translated and printed at Tranquebar by the Danish missionaries long before. I was also secretly ashamed to appear [shew] deficiency of faith in these things. The more I considered, the harder it appeared to my reasoning power; for I had not the wisdom to consider the contents of the Bible without the Common Prayer Book, and no notions of corruptions of Christianity in the reformed churches. In this state of mind I went to England again with Mr. G. H. in 1793. At this time I stayed in London about seven months and bought some books—my doubts and difficulties much the same. When I was ready to return, Mrs. Hoar's new maid-servant, a young woman by the name of Miss Raw, one evening having a small Tract in her hand, made me sit down by her work-table in the servants' room, and read several pages to me, and then left the book on the table and took to her needle.



I took that book in my hand, and was turning page after page : in the end I came to a catalogue of Dr. Priestley's and the Rev. T. Lindsey's publications. In this catalogue I found a list, called "A List of False Readings and Mistranslations of the Scripture." The moment I saw this, one after another several thoughts came across my mind, and I think I had no sleep almost all night. The next morning after my breakfast I went and bought this List from Johnson's, and read it several times. When I came to consider the contents, I was astonished to see that my doubts were not without foundation ; and that the doctrine of the Trinity, at which I stumbled, was not the doctrine of the Bible. The ardour of my Bible-study returned with redoubled vigour.

"This List of the Rev. T. Lindsey's soon set me in the right road, so as to consider the Bible and the Bible only to be the rule of faith and practice. I also bought at that time the Rev. T. Lindsey's Reformed Prayer Book, and a few other Tracts of his and Dr. Priestley's. Mr. John Raw, brother to Miss Raw, also made me a present of a Tract (Dr. Priestley's Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity.) With this acquisition, and full of joy on my new discovery, I returned to Madras in 1794.

"Soon after my return I was hired as a butler in Mr. W. Harrington's family, at eight pagodas per month, in which family I am continuing still (December 1816.) After I came into the service of Mr. Harrington and got [a] little settled, I sent to Tranquebar and purchased the Bible in my own language. This Tamul Bible, with the English one, became a great help, and explained many difficulties.—To some of my countrymen who were of the Protestant and Roman Catholic persuasion, the doctrine of One God, &c. appeared as heathenism refined. Others saw and still do see it in [a] different light ; but to me they became the greatest comfort and continual rejoicing : the more I read the Scripture, [the] stronger the proof appeared. I have also procured some books of the Trinitarians, and found their way of stating the Scripture doctrine to me altogether unsatisfactory."

"Though my poverty and mean situation in life : and also my disqualification and incapability to teach, be two great impediments ; yet as far as lay in my power I always made a point of answering, and instructing, and giving all the information I was master of to all those of my countrymen who would.

"Among those who have been my hearers, about ten families and some individuals have embraced the Unitarian faith ; seven out of the ten families are original converts from Heathenism. All of them are poor, their situation in life is much meaner than

my own. Among them, the first of my converts and the oldest man, Meguel Annathy, is about seventy-five years of age, at present very sickly; he was originally a convert to the Roman Catholic persuasion from Heathenism, and twenty years since he has embraced the doctrine of the Unitarians. He is alike a father and elder to our little society, and maintains himself and his family by keeping a Tamul school for our children.

"For our use I have drawn a set [of] forms of prayers and other offices in our own language (Tamul or Malabar), as well as I could, like that of the Rev. T. Lindsey's Reformed Prayer Book.

"We have a burying-ground of our own, and a small place of worship opened on the 19th December 1813. Those of us that can conveniently go, meet there for divine worship; and if I am there present, which happens about once in two or three Sundays, I read the Prayers and some portions of Scripture, and sometimes after prayer explain some parts of Scripture. In my absence my old friend Meguel Annathy does the same. Here we baptize, administer the Lord's supper, give marriage, and bury our dead."

"Some Europeans as well as natives have interrogated us concerning our faith; and others did and still do upbraid us for being singular and conceited, as they imagine, in our way of thinking; and also for not joining any other societies of Christians; yet no body has disturbed us on account of our religion.

"Our Prayer Books and other religious tracts written by me in Tamul (for I have no head or hand in English, as it will appear plain from these lines,) in which language only I can do any thing of the kind, are in hand-writing; we have no means of printing them. We can buy the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments from the missionary societies; and of late we are blessed with sufficient number of New Testaments from the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society. One of the agents of the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society in Madras is the Rev. Marmaduke Thomson, to whom we are very well known by the name of the Congregation of Native Christians of Pursewaukum. Pursewaukum is the place where we have our small chapel."

The second Letter, (June 17, 1818,) is in reply to one addressed to him in answer to the first, and inclosed in a small parcel of books which were sent, soon after his letter was received, and before it had been officially noticed by the Society; who afterwards directed their Secretary to write to him, and to send him a much larger parcel of books.

"I have received the parcel of your benefaction, with your very kind and very affectionate letter dated 14th July, 1817, on



the 9th of April this year." "On opening your letter, reading, and seeing the books, and finding myself and my brethren are become known to you and to your respectable society, and further encouragement is promised, I became inspired with a new life, and joy inexpressible. May God our heavenly Father, Jehovah the Holy One of Israel, increase this my joy, and give me and my brethren grace before you and your respectable society!"

"I am sorry to add that my old friend Meguel Annathy did not live to see your letter and the books; he died four months after I wrote to your respectable society, being near 76 years of age.

"Since his death our school is not yet properly settled. At present a Trinitarian Christian of Trinquabar [Tranquebar] keeps the school for our children, agreeable to our rules and regulations." "He is now, at his leisure, reading and copying my books, for which copying I pay him separately. He plainly sees and confesses that the doctrine of the Trinity and the other articles that support it,—such as Original Sin, Election, Atonement for Sin by Jesus Christ, &c.—are not the doctrines of the Bible: indeed, these will be seen more at large, if some of my writings were published and set in circulation.

"Since the death of my old friend Annathy we have no regular person to do the chapel duty on Sundays in my absence: one of the oldest members present reads the prayers, and another reads the portions of Scripture appointed for the day. If there be any christening or any other duty, they generally wait for me.

"I have made an inquiry about having our prayer-book and some other tracts printed. Mr. William Urquhart, agent of the Madras Courier and proprietor of the commercial presses, says that the prayer-book, which will contain about 300 pages in octavo, the printing charges only (without the paper and binding) will cost 168 pagodas for one hundred copies; 335 pagodas for five hundred copies; but before it can be printed leave of the government must be obtained. If our prayer-book, and a few other tracts written by me, were printed, and means added to give a suitable maintenance for a few regular teachers, we shall soon be able to find young persons to accept the business, and that will increase our numbers. Helps of books, and little small pecuniary assistance towards those who are grown old and unable to work for their livelihood, is very necessary. If we set out with such means, I have no doubt but that the doctrine of One God and his unbought pardon, with eternal bliss and everlasting life to [the] returning sinner, preached by his holy servant and universal teacher (Matthew xxii. 8, 10; Acts xvii. 31,) Jesus of Nazareth, will be readily accepted by my countrymen.

But should God Almighty, the proprietor of heaven and earth, the supreme ruler of all things, who sees what is proper for man, move the hearts of the English Unitarians in our favour, and send out missionaries to this country, a regular foundation will be laid for instructing my countrymen. At present things are very feeble: as matters stand now, should the most high God think it proper to put an end to my existence, I do not see who will take the trouble, and be at little expense, and forego some pleasures, so as to be a leader of my poor brethren. I often say in my prayer in the words of Esau, 'Hast thou but one blessing, my Father?' The Trinitarians (both white and black) teachers and disciples persuade themselves that when William Roberts dies, the name of Unitarians will cease here: This perhaps is also their secret prayer. There is not one European or European descendant among us,—not one rich man,—not one learned man,—even not one that can read English well: this disadvantage does not discourage me at all; I am convinced that the God of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is the true and living God, and am also fully persuaded that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, and the Jewish and first Christian churches, were Unitarians. To this truth I wish to bear my testimony among my countrymen as far as it lay in my power. If this be done, I leave the issue to Him whose truth I espouse."

*Congregational Church in the City of New York.*—A Congregational Society has been formed and incorporated in the city of New York, on the broad and liberal principles of the congregations in this vicinity. Many of the ministers of this town and neighbourhood, who have been for years excluded from all the pulpits of New York, have accepted the invitations of this young society, and for a year past have performed the services of their religious worship in a commodious chapel, which has been fitted up for their temporary accommodation. They are now erecting a handsome church in the centre of the city, which will probably be completed by the month of November. The corner-stone was laid with appropriate religious solemnities on the 29th of April last. The following is the Address, made upon the occasion:—

"CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

"We have assembled upon an occasion of no small interest. The erection of a new Temple to the honour of Almighty God demands of us the religious acknowledgment of his providence, and earnest supplications for his blessing. 'Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it.' Confident,



therefore, in the uprightness and purity of our intentions ; humbly trusting that we sincerely seek his glory in the promotion of that blessed religion, which he has so mercifully sent to guide us to eternal salvation ; we have come now, under the open eye of Heaven, to consecrate to Him the beginning of our labours, and to ask of Him their prosperous completion. To Him we submit the judgment of our spirits ; and, conscious as we are, that ‘the way in which we worship the God of our fathers is by many called heresy,’ and ‘every where spoken against ;’ it is our consolation and joy to be permitted to appeal to Him, and to believe that He, who looketh not on the *outward appearance*, but on the *heart*, will approve our purpose, and graciously accept our humble offering. It is a small thing to be judged of man’s judgment ; he who judgeth us is the Lord.

“As, therefore, the tribe of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh,—who, when they had built an altar for themselves on the other side of Jordan, were accused by their brethren of revolting from the true worship of God,—answered in that bold appeal and said : “The Lord, God of Gods—the Lord, God of Gods, he knoweth, and all Israel shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, that we have built us an altar”<sup>\*</sup>—so, Christian friends, if any of our brethren should imagine that this our altar is erecting in opposition to the truth, or the influence of our common Christianity, let us make the same appeal ; not doubting that they will receive it with the same ready candour. For although we have been led by the dictates of our conscience and our honest understanding of the scriptures of truth, to withdraw from their temples, it is *not* in the spirit of rebellion or hostility ; though we are about erecting another altar, it is not on the other side of Jordan, and need not destroy their confidence or friendship. We place ourselves under the broad banner of those protestant principles, which are the present glory of Christendom. We claim, and in this land the claim will not be denied us, to have our rights of conscience respected, and to be left accountable to God only ; and we trust that we are ready freely and fully to extend to others the invaluable privilege so dear to ourselves.

“It is true that we differ in some points, and, as we conceive, in some important points of religious faith, from many of the disciples of our common Lord. The Church has in every age had divisions. It is not strange that finite minds should vary in their judgments respecting infinite things. While we see darkly, it is to be expected that we should see differently ; and this dif-

<sup>\*</sup> Joshua xxii. 22.

ference cannot be sinful, unless it overthrow the foundations of holiness and piety, or occasion the destruction of the spirit of the gospel. It is they who have *not the spirit* of Christ, that are none of his. While, therefore, our allegiance to conscience, to truth, and to God, compels us to rear these walls of separate worship, we have unspeakable joy in the belief, that the great body of Christians are serving the same universal sovereign—pursuing the same holy end; and that, when we shall leave this abode of imperfect knowledge for that blessed state in which imperfection shall be done away, then, all seeing as they are seen, and knowing as they are known, shall unite in one worship in the one Temple of which God himself shall be the light and glory. In that day, when, according to our ascended Saviour's prediction, "all shall be one, even as he and the Father are one;" in that day, it shall be our happiness to understand alike the nature of that union of the Blessed Jesus with our Heavenly Father, concerning which we are now at variance. It is with such feelings and anticipations that we proceed to lay the corner-stone of our religious edifice."

This address was followed by a prayer. The corner-stone was then laid with a solemn invocation, and the following inscription deposited.

*This is Life Eternal*—to know THEE, the only TRUE GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent.

### THIS CORNER-STONE

OF THE

*FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEW YORK,*

DEDICATED TO THE WORSHIP OF THE ONLY GOD,

THROUGH THE ONLY MEDIATOR,

Founded upon the great principles of the *Reformation*—the sufficiency of the Scriptures, the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience;

WAS LAID,

With earnest prayer for the acceptance and blessing of God,

*On Saturday, the 29th of April, 1820.*

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Call no man master upon earth, for one is your master, even *Christ*, and all ye are Brethren.

In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee.

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The members of this infant establishment deserve great credit for their pure and disinterested zeal in the cause of christian truth and liberty, and should receive the encouragement and prayers of all lovers of true religion.

*The Massachusetts Bible Society* held their annual meeting on the 8th of June, and have published the following REPORT :—

“The Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Bible Society respectfully report, that they have distributed the following Bibles and Testaments in the course of the past year, viz.

180 Large Bibles.  
1439 Small do.  
1934 Testaments.

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3553 Total.

“The demands on our Society have been so numerous as to absorb our annual income, so that no surplus fund can be remitted to the American Bible Society. We owe, however, to that society an important benefit, which we anticipated from its institution; that is, the power of furnishing Bibles in a fair and handsome type, and in durable binding, at a moderate expense. The very poorest now read the Scriptures in better editions than were formerly used by the great body of the people.

“During the last year, the Trustees have been solicitous to establish regulations for preventing the abuses and impositions to which our Institution is liable, and they believe that such checks have been devised, as will, in a great measure, confine this charity to its proper objects. An important improvement, however, remains to be made. The experience of the last year has shown, that many, who cannot pay the full price of a Bible, may be induced to pay in proportion to their ability; and the distributors of our books are earnestly requested to invite and encourage this just and honourable effort among their poor brethren. In this way, our means of usefulness will be enlarged, and the Scriptures will be prized, preserved and read more faithfully, than when received wholly as a charity. In England, the poor are encouraged to supply their own wants, and some of them pay for a Bible by small weekly appropriations from their earnings; and thus the British and Foreign Bible Society accumulates resources for its immense operations abroad.

“Your Committee are happy to state, that the uncommon zeal, which has been manifested for the last fifteen years in this good cause, gives no signs of weariness or exhaustion. Indeed, Christians cannot draw back from a work, the success of which

has been so sudden, wide, and unparalleled. To those who have not consulted the reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the extent and zeal of the co-operation now existing and continually spreading in this benevolent and Christian enterprise, cannot easily be conceived. That this remarkable union of effort in Europe may have been aided by human policy, we admit; but it is too spontaneous, sincere and ardent, to be ascribed to that as its main cause; and it ought to be regarded as a proof that, amidst the corruptions of Christendom, a strong attachment to Christianity, much stronger than we had anticipated, is rooted in men's minds. The multiplication of Bible Societies in France, although their number and efforts bear little proportion to the resources and wants of that kingdom, is one of the promising events of the past year. In Russia, the Word of God 'has free course and is glorified' to an extent truly astonishing; Bible Societies being spread over that immense empire even to Siberia. Similar institutions have also been planted in Greece. The Rev. Dr. Pinkerton, the indefatigable missionary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, writes, 'I have news to communicate, which will fill your hearts with joy. *Athens also is become the seat of a Bible Society.*'

"The duty of giving to the poor, and of spreading through the world, a divine revelation, which we believe to have been intended for the whole human race, is so plain and urgent, that we wonder that its obligation was not formerly more understood and felt. We should be grateful, that we live in an age, which, instead of sheltering itself under the example of past times, is labouring to repair their deficiencies, and which is distinguished by an earnest and enlarged philanthropy. To be inactive at such a period, when so good a spirit is circulating round us, when benevolent plans, which would once have been scoffed at for their wildness, are prosecuted with fervour and success, would expose us to just reproach. Every sincere and enlightened Christian considers the religion of his Master as the most important interest on earth, and he cannot, in such an age as this, withhold his prayers and efforts for its success."

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*The American Bible Society* held its annual meeting in New York on the 11th of May. We shall notice its report at some future time.

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*The Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts* held their semi-annual meeting in the first parish of Dorchester on the 7th of June. The discourse was delivered by Rev. H. Ware of Boston, from Galatians vi. 10. It has been published. A collec-



tion was taken in aid of the objects of the Society, amounting to \$95 23.

The Treasurer of the Society acknowledges the receipt of the following sums from churches and individuals, since the last annual meeting, October 5, 1819.

1819.

Hon. Benjamin Pickman, Salem, amount of two donations	-	\$ 50
Ladies of West-Church, Boston, through Rev. C. Lowell,	{	58
accidentally omitted in last account,		
Contribution after the annual discourse, Oct. 7, in First Church, Chauncey-Place,	{	46 53
- - - - -		

1820.

From Ladies in Brookline, through their pastor, Rev. John Pierce,	{	30 28
- - - - -		
From a Lady in West Church, through Rev. C. Lowell,	-	10
Contribution in Second Church, through Rev. Henry Ware,	-	43
From a Lady of New-North Church, through the Rev. F. Parkman,	{	10
- - - - -		
Female Cent Society, in East-Parish, Bridgewater, through Rev. J. Flint,	{	12 62
- - - - -		
From a Lady in Roxbury, through Rev. Dr. Porter,	-	5
From Ladies of the West Church, Boston, through Rev. C. Lowell,	{	106
- - - - -		
From contribution after semi-annual discourse, June 7, in Rev. Dr. Harris' Church, Dorchester,	{	95 23
- - - - -		
From a Parishoner, through Rev. F. Parkman,	-	10
From a Parishoner, through Rev. W. E. Channing,	-	20
First dividend, received on eight shares in stock of Marine Insurance Company, bequeathed to the Society by the late Miss Sarah Russell, of Charlestown,	{	48
- - - - -		

In these accounts *annual* and *life* subscriptions are not included. Other churches have made or are making collections, the amount of which, not being yet ascertained, will be given in a future number. We are very happy in noticing the increased attention and patronage, which appear to be excited to this interesting and useful Institution.

*The Convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts*, met in the new Court House, on Wednesday May 31, 5 o'clock P.M. Rev. Dr. Bancroft, moderator, opened the meeting with prayer. Rev. J. Pierce, who had been chosen scribe for ten years successively, was re-elected, but declined, and the Rev. J. Codman was chosen. Rev. F. Parkman was re-chosen treasurer. Rev. Dr. Worcester, of Salem, was chosen second preacher. The Convention attended to the usual business of the meeting, which was continued by adjournment through Thursday morning. At 12 o'clock they assembled for worship in the church in Brattle Square, when the annual discourse was delivered by Rev. Dr. Bancroft of Worcester, from Phil. i. 17., *I am set for the defence of*

*the gospel.* The collection which was made for the widows and orphans of deceased ministers amounted to \$406 00. The members of the Convention partook of a dinner, provided at the expense of the Congregational Churches in Boston. The Sermon has been printed.

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*Meeting of the Liberal Clergy.*—Agreeably to arrangements previously made, a large number of the ministers of the Commonwealth who are denominated liberal, met together on the evening preceding Election, at the vestry of the church in Federal Street. The Rev. James Flint, of Bridgewater, led the devotions of the evening, and the Rev. W. E. Channing delivered an address on the objects of the meeting. We expect to be able to lay this address before our readers in the next number of the Disciple. The meeting was adjourned to the next evening, when much interesting and profitable conversation was had on the state and prospects of religion. A similar meeting was appointed for the next year to be holden at the same place on the morning of election day, at eight o'clock.

The following articles state the objects and rules of the meeting.

*At a Meeting of Ministers from different parts of the Commonwealth, May 31, 1820, the following rules were adopted:—*

1. There shall be an annual meeting in election week for mutual improvement in pastoral duty, and for the promotion of Christian truth and holiness.
2. At each annual meeting a moderator and scribe shall be chosen by nomination.
3. One of the brethren shall offer a prayer, and another deliver an address suited to the objects of the meeting; it being understood, that these services shall be short, so as to leave time for the other exercises.
4. Each brother shall be requested to report the state and prospects of religion in his vicinity, and to suggest any measures for promoting truth and practical piety, which the circumstances of the times may seem to require, or which his own experience or observation may have led him to approve.
5. Any brother shall be authorized to propose for discussion any plan for advancing ministerial usefulness, for uniting our efforts in the common cause, and in general for spreading the knowledge and spirit of Christianity.
6. At each meeting a committee of three shall be appointed to select the persons who shall officiate at the next meeting, to assign the subject for the address, to use such means as they



shall deem expedient for ensuring a general attendance, and to report such measures as shall appear to them fitted to increase the usefulness of the meeting.

The Moderator and Scribe shall, *ex officio*, be members of this Committee.

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The annual meeting of various Religious Societies was holden during Election week, which we have not room to notice particularly.

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*St. Paul's Church*, lately erected in this town, was on Friday, consecrated to the service and worship of God, according to the forms prescribed by the canons of the Episcopal Church. The religious services were performed by the Rev. Bishop GRISWOLD, and the Rev. Dr. GARDINER, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. JARVIS, Pastor elect of the Society.

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We have just received a copy of "Letters on the ministry, ritual, and doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church, addressed to the Rev. Wm. E. Wyatt, D.D. Associate Minister of St. Paul's Parish, Baltimore, and Professor of Theology in the University of Maryland, in reply to a sermon exhibiting some of the principal doctrines of the protestant episcopal church in the United States,—by Jared Sparks, A.M. minister of the first independent church of Baltimore." The first letter is employed in combating the assumption (which it appears is still maintained in Baltimore) of the divine or apostolic institution of episcopal orders,—the second is on the church ritual,—the third on the asserted authority of the church in controversies of faith,—the fourth on the Calvinistic import of the articles,—and the fifth and sixth on the doctrine of the trinity. We are much gratified to announce such a work from such a hand. Mr. Sparks is in a situation to see Episcopacy, countenanced and emboldened by the yet more extravagant pretensions of the Romish Church, appearing in its least modest form; and for this, among other reasons, we look forward with much interest to the perusal of a volume which shall contain the observations of a scholar on a mistaken portion of ecclesiastical history, and the views which one, who can estimate the worth of religious liberty, has taken of a system, whose yoke our fathers of New England crossed the ocean, and planted a desert to shake off. A notice of it may be expected in our next number.

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We perceive by a notice in the *Allgemeines Repertorium* (General Repertory) No. 18, Leipsick, 1819, that the *History of the Jews* by Miss H. Adams been translated into German from the London edition. After some account of the work, the author of the notice observes, that the translator has undertaken a useful labour, as there is no similar work in German proper for general use. He at the same time praises this valuable history for its simple, inartificial and unprejudiced style of narration.

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The late Thomas Cary, Esq. of Newburyport, has bequeathed to the Theological Institution at Cambridge, a large property, supposed to amount to *ten or fifteen thousand dollars*.

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Moses Brown, Esq. late of Beverly, has made a bequest to the same Institution of *two thousand dollars*.

CHRISTIAN TRACTS *Published by* WELLS & LILLY.

No. 1. William's Return, or Good News for Cottagers: by Mary Hughes. Price single, 17 cents, per dozen 1 *doll.* 62 *cts.*, per hundred 10 *dolls.*

No. 2. Village Dialogues. Parts 1 and 2. 12 1-2 cents single.—1 *doll.* 12 1-2 per dozen.—8 *dolls.* per 100.

No. 3. Village Dialogues. Part 3. 12 1-2 cents do. do. do.

No. 4. Village Dialogues. Part 4. 12 1-2 cents do. do. do.

No. 5. Village Dialogues. Part 5. 12 1-2 cents do. do. do.

No. 6. Village Dialogues. Part 6. 12 1-2 cents do. do. do.

No. 7. A Week in a Cottage. 12 1-2 cents do. do. do.

No. 8. The History of Edward Allen, the patient man. Price 17 *cts.* single.—1 *doll.* 62 per dozen.—10 *dolls.* per 100.

No. 9. The Widow. Price 12 1-2 cents

No. 10. The History of Eleanor Williams. Price 20 cents.—1 *doll.* 80 per dozen.—12 *dolls.* 50 per 100.

They have collected 25 copies of the following valuable Tracts; which may be had together in neat boards, at the very low price of *two dollars fifty cents.*

1. View of the Constitution and Associate Statutes of the Theological Seminary in Andover; from the Monthly Anthology of Nov. 1808.

2. "The Unity of God," a Sermon. By Rev. S. Thacher.

3. Channing's Letter to Thacher.

4. ——— Remarks on Dr. Worcester's Letter.

5. ——— Remarks on Worcester's Second Letter.

6. Review of the Improved Version, and of Griesbach's New Testament from the Eclectic Review.

7. Dr. Ware's Sermon before the Convention, 1818.

8. Price's Five Sermons on the Christian Doctrine.

9. Theological Tracts, No. 1. containing *Zollikoffer's Seven Sermons* on the Reformation.

10. Theological Tracts, No. 2. *Bell on the Lord's Supper, complete,* with the Appendix and all the Notes.

11. Theological Tracts, No. 3. *Bishop Hare* on the Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures.

12. Foster's, James, Essay on Fundamentals, with a particular Regard to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

13. An Inquiry into the Right to Change the ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTION of the *Congregational Churches of Massachusetts, &c. &c.*

14. Review of Professor Stuart's Letters to Mr. Channing; from the *Christian Disciple.*

15. Statement of Reasons for not believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians, &c. occasioned by Professor Stuart's Letters; from the *Christian Disciple.*

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TO CORRESPONDENTS AND READERS.

We presume that the motto prefixed to JOHN's paper was intended as a hint to ourselves, and not for the edification of the public.

An *Essay on the Communion* came too late for insertion in the present number.

Several other favours have been received, to which we shall pay more particular attention hereafter.